HENRY JAMES

The true thing that most matters to us is the true thing we have the most use for, and there are surely many occasions on which the truest thing of all is the necessity of the mind, its simple necessity of feeling. Whether it feels in order to learn or learns in order to feel, the event is the same; the side on which it shall most feel will be the side to which it will most incline.

James, *Notes on Novelists*, "George Sand, 1897."

THE QUEST FOR REFINEMENT

A Study of the Novels of Henry James

N. KRISHNA RAO

VAGDEVI
VISAKHAPATNAM-1 (A.P.)

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FIRST PUBLISHED 1972

Copies can be had of

VAGDEVI,

Book Centre Buildings,

Visakhapatnam-1 (A.P.).

PRINTED AT SARASWATI PRINTING WORKS, VISAKHAPATNAM-1.

To the memory of my mother

FOREWORD

In a prediction made in 1924 regarding the applicability of the spirit of Henry James to 'our future,' T. S. Eliot had observed :

> Henry James is an author who is difficult for English readers because he is an American; and who is difficult for Americans, because he is a European; and I do not know whether he is possible to other readers at all. On the other hand, the exceptionally sensitive reader, who is neither English nor American, may have a position of detachment which is an advantage.

Dr. Krishna Rao's book on James is to be welcomed as a proof of the advantage mentioned by Eliot and also as a testimony to the recent growing interest Indian scholars have been taking in Jamesian fiction. Having wooed too long the courtly muses of Emerson, Whitman and Thoreau (partly for their obvious Indological connections), Indian scholarship has lately turned its attention to Henry James and his contemporaries in American Literature. This marks a shift in the Indian critical preoccupations from the panoramic to the scenic, from the mythic past to the lively present, from grand assertion to dramatic tension. In the euphoria of an Indian Renaissance, we had believed that the masters of the American Renaissance offered us a world-view that reflected our own at the time. But since Independence, we have become more self-searching and self-critical; Hawthorne, Melville, Mark Twain and Henry James seem to be more relevant to our sense of things.

A special reason why James fascinates us is that his 'passage to India' is a product of our own transitional consciousness. The point of visionary mediation occupied by his fictional world in the transatlantic setting has an analogue in our own system of self-reference. James's treatment of the two cultures puts our own East-West encounter in a meaningful and vital perspective. His thematic preoccupation with the tension between manners and morals, between cultural innocence and experience and between self and society seems to coincide with the modern Indian-writer's concern with such matters. Also his 'transcendent humanism' seems to sum up an attitude which might well nigh be ours in relation to our past inheritance and our present predicament. The lesson of the master is a creative reinforcement of the ideal of human integrity pitted against the sirens of a

materialistic utopia. Throughout his work James had dramatized the 'black and merciless things' that are behind great possessions. Setting himself firmly against both the Primitive and the Philistine, he had affirmed the healthy stance of the individual gifted with what Melville had described as 'interior spaciousness' and the capacity to view all things with 'an equal eye'.

All this James did, as Graham Greene says, not as a moralist, but as a realist. Even when he drew a circle around himself and the artistic *metier* he imaginatively inhabited, James was not enclosing or fencing off significant experience, but was in real fact only including and deepening his 'felt life' until art and vision coalesced into an organic design of human universals. It is therefore not impossible for a reader from another culture to enter into and respond to his fictional world and to deal with his work as both unit and progression.

Dr. Krishna Rao's book, I believe, does full justice to the unit as well as the progression in James's fictional canon. Dr. Krishna Rao has defined refinement as that extension and orientation of the human consciousness which reconciles and blends the manichaen oppositions in culture and personality and ensures the fruition of ultimate virtues such as detachment, understanding, self-sacrifice and forgiveness. He describes how the Jamesian Ethic both artistically and experientially enacts the phases of quest, ordeal, crisis and fulfilment. The individual arrives finally at a point, an epiphany, of his consciousness, and realizes the wasteful splendour of evil and the consummate power of compassion and renunciation. Dr. Krishna Rao's arguement is fully documented, and its logic everywhere clearly and forcefully enunciated.

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PREFACE

This book offers a thematic study of the idea of refinement as the central premise in the Jamesian ethic. Refinement as an organic factor in the development of James's art has received the exhaustive critical attention it deserves, but its importance in James's moral sensibility has not been adequately stressed. The present study hopes to make a modest contribution in this direction by investigating the dramatic relationship between refinement and selfhood in the novels of Henry James as it develops through the four major movements of his artistic creation. The problem is viewed in terms of the growth and education of the Jamesian individual whose quest for a meaningful selfhood becomes identified with the analogous quest for the refinements of life. The metamorphic cycle of individual growth is traced in terms of its archetypal patterns : the quest, the ordeal, the crisis and fulfilment.

I am grateful to my venerable teachers, Prof. K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar, Prof. K. Viswanatham, Sri B. Muthuswami, and Dr. Ila Rao for their goodwill, kindness and encouragement. The idea for this study was first suggested by Prof. D. V. K. Raghavacharyulu who had patiently guided my research in the past and who continues to be a constant source of inspiration and help to me. I am once again deeply beholden to him for his gracious contribution of a foreword to this book. I am thankful to my friends Dr. T. V. Satyanarayana, Dr. B. Ramachandra Rao, Mrs. K. Lakshmi Devi, Dr. S. Krishna Sarma, Dr. L. S. R. Krishna Sastry, Sri M. S. R. Murty for their invaluable suggestions and help.

I am thankful to Professors A. Kettle, Douglas Grant and D. W. Jefferson, all from the Leeds University, for their valuable suggestions (as adjudicators of my doctoral thesis in 1964), which I have borne in mind, while revising the thesis for publication.

In a work of this kind, I am obliged to record my indebtedness to all the major critics of Henry James and have so acknowledged in the bibliography. My thanks are also due to the Andhra University, Waltair, for the permission accorded to publish my thesis with the necessary revisions in content.

Finally, I express my sincere appreciation and thanks to Mr. M. Varahalu Chetty for sponsoring this publication as well as for his support and encouragement in the preparation of this book.

New Year Day, 1972
Andhra University, Waltair.

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THE IDEA

The word refinement occurs in the novels of Henry James with such an emphatic frequency as to invite its application as an organic metaphor controlling and illuminating the writer's art and vision of life. The word and the idea it embodies are never given an explicit definition in the novels, but James continuously places before the reader situations, actions and characters, in whose complex reality refinement achieves its dramatic projection. Refinement in the Jamesian universe reveals itself fundamentally as that element in human nature and in the structure of society, which involves the human self in the possibility and the fact of change and of human growth and transformation.

The total output of James's fiction can be meaningfully interpreted as a continuous tracing out of the idea of refinement. The major themes of James's novels and the major phases of his artistic development readily organise themselves into a single frame-work of critical analysis provided by the concept of refinement. The international theme, that of the collision of two cultures, one embodied in American innocence, and the other in European experience, emerges as a parable of human refinement, in which the human personality is liberated into the wider freedom of a universal life. The theme of the pilgrim in search of society, and that of the artist in search of truth are similarly elaborated as illustrations of human refinement attained through a transcendence of limited consciousness.

Starting with vague surmises and uncertain formulations of the ideal of refinement, Henry James arrived at his first major discovery of the relationship between the self and the society as a projection of refinement in *The Portrait of a Lady*, which was the culminating point of his first phase. Isabel Archer's inclusive view of life demands the exclusion of her selfhood, and James endows upon refinement an identity and kinship with the values of detachment, renunciation, acceptance and affirmation. In the middle period of his career, James was continuously trying out the cultural and social inflections of human refinement, but the paradoxical nature and quality of the idea continued to tease him. In the novels of this period, Henry James was preoccupied with the problem of evil and, accordingly, refinement is dramatised in terms of complex cultures and individual behaviour which are not accessible to the impact and influence of

refinement. One knows better what refinement is not than what it is. The essence of moral and spiritual evil is the incapacity of the individual to participate in the freedom of choice and in the possibility of extended awareness initiated by refinement. James was at the same time dramatising the dangers of over-refinement too, for excessive refinement prevents the maturation of the human personality by attenuating its strategies of will into the reflexes of presumptuous sinfulness. *The Spoils of Poynton, The Turn of the Screw,* and *The Sacred Fount* emphasize the hazards of misconceived, misdirected and over-reaching refinement.

In his three major novels of the last phase, *The Ambassadors, The Wings of the Dove* and *The Golden Bowl,* Henry James made a total recall of his earlier paradigms of refinement. Yet in these novels, without committing himself to a definition, he was able to establish the positive attributes of his ideal. Each one of these novels is a diagram of an emergent human refinement constituting itself as the final measure of human readiness, and of human ripeness. In *The Ambassadors,* Lambert Strether who, as he achieves his final refinement, learns to be a self-effacing preceptor rather than a self-assured preacher of refinement. He gives convincing proof of his refinement by not demanding the fruits thereof, and by consciously avoiding to force his own refinement on others. In *The Wings of the Dove,* James presents yet another portrait in refinement - a refinement which does not stop with the initiate, but spreads its influence with a natural spontaneity to those in want of it, or ready for it. Milly's sacrifice is seraphically free from the taint of martyrdom, and thus unconsciously acquires a self-radiating potency which inevitably touches everything in its range and lends it the unstrained quality of refinement. In *The Golden Bowl,* masculine and feminine refinements intersect each other resolving the crisis of life. The wasteful divisions of human loyalty which bring tragedy, are replaced by a creative fidelity to harmonious, fruitful selfhood enacted by the ideal of refinement. In *The Golden Bowl,* the art of refinement is indeed reconciled to the life of refinement; art has merged into life, and life has transfigured itself into an order of beauty and truth, in which both are united in their self-transcending power.

In his first artistic phase, Henry James explores refinement as the process of achieving the truth of selfhood. In the middle period he presents it in its vulnerable, corruptive and critical aspects. In

the major novels he dramatises it not merely as a process of self-assertive virtue, but also as a mode of self-transcendence which has destroyed the barriers between the self and the world outside.

Henry James's fiction traces and develops the idea of refinement intrinsically and organically as a quest for the truth of human selfhood. At this point, Henry James reveals the historical connections between his own art and that of the American writers who preceded him. The human self and its modes of expression have been the fundamental premises of the American imagination. Emerson was indulging in a mnemonic recapitulation of the heritage of the American people, when he declared his age to be an age of the "first person singular". The Pilgrim Fathers first landed on the shores of the New World propelled, as they were, by the promptitudes of the European self which was still fresh under the impact of the Renaissance and the Reformation. The Puritans, tradition-directed as they were, localised and inhabited a whole cultural tradition within the resources of the human self. And whatever they did to establish a New World culture felt the pull and tug of the human self. Their townships, their universities, their jungle clearances, their theocracy, their laborious theological and naturalistic discourses, all bore the common stamp of a self unabashedly eager to express itself in a thousand manifestations of its irrepressible energy. Ironically enough even the thundering, wrathful and vindictive God of the Puritans turned out to be an emblem of the Puritan selfhood. In the very congenial and Epicurean South, under the impact of the Deistic Rationalism and Naturalistic Enlightenment, nature was viewed more or less as an extension of the human self, and the foundations of the American Republic were themselves laid on the firm rock of the human self. The Westward Frontier was undoubtedly a cosmic simulacrum of the human self imposing its forms and its moods on the shapeless and chaotic vitalities of the discoverable and inexhaustible dimensions of time and space. When a truly national literature for America was coming into being, the writers were compelled to turn to the abstractions of American selfhood in order to discover the universals of experience, and thus make life and tradition available as the resources of art.

The literature of the nineteenth century, somewhat nebulously called transcendentalist, was in a sense a continuous dramatisation of the idea of American selfhood. Emerson declared the literary

independence of America by declaring free the selfhood of the American Scholar, who was advised to establish an original relationship between himself and the universe. Thoreau went to the extent of proving in practice the truth of the transcendental self. He even went further and tapped the unconscious resources of human selfhood, from which man must recover the primal energies of the self which were lost in the quiet desperations of social life. Walt Whitman discovered the new America as an old America achieving passages into new selfhood. In a sense, his *Song of Myself* was a collective memorialisation in word and song of the American self as an extended genesis of history combined with the fact of Manifest Destiny. Hawthorne, Melville and Poe were writing about the American self too, but they rather preferred to dramatise the tragic isolation of man through a self out of tune with experience, and out of contact with the world. Although they chose to adumbrate in their work a negative concept of the transcendentalist man, they too used the self as the key to experience, and as the very frame of the historical and tragic destiny of man. Hawthorne explored the Puritan past in terms of the new Adamic self, while Melville sent his Ahab on his dark voyage into light, equipped with only the fierce harpoon of selfhood as the avenging weapon of a castrated will set against the irrevocable forces of Fate. Poe employed the idea of the self in order to reveal the tragedy as well as the liberating power of romantic individualism. In such tales as *The House of Usher,* and *The Pit and the Pendulum,* Poe too made the self the symbol of the meaning of human destiny. James Fenimore Cooper wrote novel after novel letting the Frontier and the American self interact upon each other until they had almost become co-extensive, and until they were identified with the conceptual myth of the American Dream. Thus, the great American writers had already demonstrated the uses of the self in conferring upon American literary nationalism its aesthetic autonomy. They presented the tragedies and the fulfilments of selfhood as an evolving aspect of refinement.

Henry James came of age at a time when American culture was going through a crisis of shock, and change, and expansion, which in the long run was to impart to it a historical sense of identity. The battle between the South and the North brought to the surface the fundamental antagonisms in the American society, the awareness of which made literary fulfilment coeval with tragic self-analysis. This cultural self-analysis was inevitably bound up with the facts of

American experience, as they were beginning to fall into perspective during the period which followed the Civil War and its aftermath, the Gilded Age. The Jeffersonian abstractions of idyllic pastoralism, and the implicit dream of individual destiny fulfilling itself in the benevolent laws of nature, and in an ideal of individual conduct maturing itself under the civilising force of social obligation, had already been exhausted in the defeat of the South and the Southern aristocracy. On the contrary, the Hamiltonian ideal of an urban industrial set-up, implying a limited autonomy to the individual, and a vigorous emphasis on the factors contributing to the emergence of a centralised affluent society, was being realised with an almost aggressive precipitancy, first in the North, and then wherever the hand of the North went plucking the fruits of industry. The Gilded Age was an age of intoxicating opportunism in regard to material expansion. But inwardly it was an age of lost opportunities in regard to the values of the spirit, and the unobtrusive civilities of an adult culture which had overgrown the troubles of adolescence. There was yet another force in the intellectual history of the times that forced its entry into the conscious aesthetic sensibility of the age. It was the proliferation of social, biological, astronomical, geological and anthropological ideas which, given their unchecked growth, might have radically altered the social structure. But the expected result did not come about, because of the Genteel Tradition which had made a conscious myth of the American individualism and had soft-cushioned the revolutionary impact of ideas.

American individualism became a convenient middle ground, accommodating extreme social and intellectual attitudes, and protecting the inner core of the American traditional structure of society from the onslaught of change. This intellectual middle ground turned a potentially revolutionary age into an age of mild transition. But the literature of the times absorbed, as an aesthetic feed-back, the change-enforcing orientations of the intellectual outlook of the times. In the American literature between the Civil War and the twentieth century, the clash of ideas and the resulting spiritual and intellectual tensions were reflected sharply.

The most outstanding consequence of the climate of ideas during the period was not so much a search for authentic tradition distilled by introspective memory out of a legendary past, but rather a conscious search for the meaning of the reality of present experience

as it manifested itself in the contemporary society and in the immediate predicament of mankind. Hawthorne, Melville and others of a previous generation had by-passed the raw energy, the crude vitality and the physical gigantism of American society, for they had not their eyes set on the present but on its polar oppositions in the past and in the future. Symbolists and allegorists, as they were, they had left out the sheer sensuous surfaces of American life and had abandoned sensation for sensibility, experience for vision, and direct presentation of facts for the emblematic indirections of the ultimate values. Under the impact of Darwinian Naturalism and radical social philosophies, American literature began steadily turning its aesthetic vitality towards the complex reality of American life. All the major writers during the 1880's, and later, were collectively posing not the question of what was truth, as their predecessors had done, but the question of what was reality. William James brought to a proverbial culmination in his empirical philosophy this remarkable shift of the intellectual accent from truth to reality. Whereas truth was unknowable in the ultimate sense, reality was knowable and capable of being subjected to the precise disciplines of the human mind. In one form or another, realism became the bedrock idea in American writing.

The major protagonists of literary realism were Mark Twain, William Dean Howells and Henry James. Mark Twain was documenting American life with an almost fierce commitment to regional reality, but the quality of his personal sensibility compelled him to interpose between the fact and experience of reality the nostalgic prism of boyhood reminiscence. Soon the direction of Mark Twain's realism changed towards the terminal points of reality, where it became identified with naturalistic determinism in such work as *The Mysterious Stranger* and *Puddin'head Wilson*. Ironically enough, the author of the Mississippi Trilogy who had his American hero complete his education in life in the flexible morality of nature, symbolised by the fluent riparian richness of the big-hearted river, turned to the opposite extreme where the American hero, still a reluctant adolescent, was confronted with reality as a fixed state of being, which on examination turned out to be nothing more than a tin-foiled illusion. Naturalism was later to advance itself into new rhythms of achievement in the works of Hamlin Garland, Stephen Crane, Jack London and Theodore Dreiser. But in Mark Twain's literary career, realism ran the full course of naturalism; from circumstantial detail to the

mystic imponderables of human life. William Dean Howells was also concerned with the reality of life as it manifested itself both in the fate of the individual and in the condition of society, but his realism was a peculiarly limited kind of literary commitment. Howells, like Whitman, identified himself not with a divine, but a secular average of American experience, to which he gave the designation of reality. He surveyed American society in its bourgeois middle-class cross-sections and presented American reality in the patterns and diagrams of the situations, incidents, manners and attitudes of that section of society. Inspite of the latter day reaction against Howells, there is no gainsaying the fact that Howells had sounded a major aspect of American reality as starting from and merging with the family and the domestic environment, the permanent seminal forces in human life. Sherwood Anderson and Sinclair Lewis had to build their structures of imagination on the foundations of Howells's domestic realism, before they could perfect their own fictional types of psychological and social realism.

In the two schools of American realism, represented by Mark Twain, on one hand, and William Dean Howells, on the other, reality was sought to be defined and discovered in terms of an external focus outside the individual's consciousness. When all the forces that governed the destiny of man had been summed up, man still remained an undeciphered integer, and his fate, an incalculable code of mystery. Man's inner sensibility had either been neglected completely, or glossed over in relation to some area of his total personality, delimited by his own personal history, as in Mark Twain, or by his social history, as in Howells. It was left to Henry James to probe this neglected inner life of the individual and turn American realism towards an inner centre of significance. James's preoccupation with the inner reality of the impressionable personality of the individual was central and organic to his writing. At the same time, it formulated a creative process which, in his work, was by its very definition identical with the processes of continuous refinement. Reality enters into the mind and the sensibility of the individual, and its generic elements, emerging as impressions, organise themselves into a pattern which is no less than truth, and is no more exhaustible than the total personality of the man. The process whereby reality becomes truth is the aesthetic measure which must describe at all times the process, by means of which life becomes art. In other words, James's whole theory of reality and his entire theory and

practice of fiction were the projections of his idea of refinement, which rendered possible the inspired transcription of felt experience into the novel of consciousness.

Henry James's background, his upbringing and the whole tenor of his personal and artistic life equipped him preeminently to be the portrayer of the inner life in all its creative rhythms. As a young man, he was trained to the disciplines of freedom, and his sensibility became attuned to a climate of culture which lay between the Old World and the New World, between the inheritance of the past and the uniqueness of the present. His later acceptance of a European home, away from his own native American home, was no mere histrionic gesture of an abrupt shock, or furtive resentment, but was rather the inevitable culmination of a life-pattern made steadily accessible to the responsible choices of a cultivated will and a refined consciousness. His father's prosperous position accomplished the initial freedom of his spirit, and also permitted his later freedom from the banality of social sub-surfaces towards the central values and verities lying embedded in the inner autonomy of the artistic individual. Henry James Senior had himself a highly intelligent and responsive mind which left its impact on the thought and art of his son. The father, who had accepted the faith of Swedenborg, developed a theory of a universal consciousness, which he called 'vastation', a theory which added the element of the primitive symbolism of religious faith to the individualistic fervour of American transcendentalism, in much the same manner as Jung's theories of the racial unconscious have artistically augmented the Freudian illuminations in modern literature. The conversion of conscience into consciousness, wherein lay Henry James's idea of refinement, was almost subconsciously derived from this source of paternal influence, while the subtle psychological instrumentation of such a conversion and transfiguration was at least derived from the empirical and psychological doctrines of his brother, William James. The house of the Jameses was in a sense the seed-bed of the novelist's artistic creation, and it is no exaggeration to say that from no other American House could have emanated the Jamesean dialectic of the inner life.

Within the framework of the genius of tradition rose up the window out of which the imagination of James was to send out his vision into the world as well as to draw into himself the bracing draughts of the world's experience. His trans-Atlantic vision of the

two cultures that always engaged his mind was as natural as it was inevitable. Henry James had developed a philosophy of the inner life in his own individual experience to match the one he derived from his heritage. Whether it was frustrated patriotism, or unfulfilled love, or a sense of universal failure, Henry James had always nurtured the sense of tragedy, which only the utmost human refinement could divest it of its physical attributes and transform it into the tragic sense of an obscure hurt. Contemplating upon the disparities of the ideal and the actual in America, or probing into the more complex differentiations of cultural success and failure, between American morals and European manners, or meditating on the subtle contraries and compensations, among which individual human destiny shaped itself a universe of values, Henry James was unceasingly preoccupied with the depths, rather than the mere masses of life. In his writings as a whole, life is brought to the service of art through a penance of objectivity which eliminates the facts of things and concentrates itself on their deep inlaid patterns and meanings. The penance was perforce tragic in the sense that it exposed American reality to the frightening forces of the abstract, but the imagination of Henry James turned it from its ascetic base of the abstract into the concrete aesthetic pivot of a festive comedy. Henry James's idea of refinement is essentially one of providing the higher rewards of felt life in the place of the easy satisfactions of social and individual commonplaces, the significant in the place of the trivial, the continuous in the place of the stagnant, and the permanent in the place of the transient. The bracing enthusiasms of internalised experience are of the very essence of the Jamesian code of refinement - a code up to which James himself lived both as a man and as an artist.

Henry James was not interested in the kind of reality which his contemporaries were concerned with, nor was he interested in a purely naturalistic treatment of the reality of the inner life. Documentation of human psychology was not his purpose, although he did deal with the psychology of minds and events and its impact on the textures of individual life. He went on, in one novel after another, straining after the very springs of human character and human motivation, which for him defined his particular area of realism. He traced an idea to its origin, set one idea against another, and discovered the pattern of relationships which the ideas gave rise to, through an impressionistic indirection in which the autonomy of the ideas was preserved, but their energy released in multivalent richness. He was not so much

interested in the empirical posturings of reality as in combining them into the sustained drama of revelation. He let reality declare, express and fulfil itself in the process of incessant self-organisation. He dislocated impressions from the gross solidity of facts and made them realise themselves in the flowing sequences of thought. He dramatised human character by letting its formative elements spell out their own patterns until the final portrait emerged. In order to achieve this, Henry James had to develop a highly sophisticated sense of aesthetic finality, and he was convinced, from the very biginning of his career, of his artistic mission. In his quest for refinement, both as an artist and as a citizen of the world, Henry James established his own 'genre' of the American novel of refinement.

Refinement as dramatised by James in his novels does not imply an abdication of obligation to reality. It is not an escape of the clever and the vulgar from the inconveniences of social fact, it is much rather a state of mind which imposes on sensitive individuals the obligation of participating in reality at a point of chosen depth so that the human spirit is made free to fulfil itself in an extension of the possibilities of life. Refinement cannot be had without discrimination, and it is of the essence of discrimination to let the drama of life rest on the hinges of a crucial choice. Once this choice is made, refinement distills chaos into order, and order moves the human personality into the more significant rhythms of a mind extending itself perpetually into consciousness. If refinement can be had only by distilling the essence from the dross, awareness, too, can result from it; and once awareness is achieved, the whole of life is invited into the individual's open sensibility. One may define Henry James's idea of refinement in terms of how the inner life is dramatised in the context of its originating patterns. First, there is a virtual withdrawl of the mind and character from the centres of reality; the individual is, as it were, denitiated away from life and placed in an isolation forced on him by the very nature of his choice. Next, the individual is made to undergo the process of an introspective revaluation of the consequences of choice, and soon he is given the resilient strength of a transformed attitude, or placed in a crisis of conscience, or made to face 'an ordeal of consciousness'; and, finally, comes a single or cumulative recognition and awareness of the whole process that lies before and after the central fact of choice. The achievement of total awareness results in an acceptance of life not in parts, but as a whole, and one realises that, through a provisional renunciation of the prerogatives of life, one

acquires the privileges of a higher life of truth. The individual is initiated into a life which has been totally recovered for him, and all the losses become rewarding gains. This pattern of refinement emerges in its final shape in the novels of the major phase in Henry James's career. By that time he was able to evolve a method of organically integrationg the thematic perceptions of refinement and its artistic formulations into a unified aesthetic impulse. While Henry James revealed life in its Dionysian ecstasies by refining it into a rapture of existence in the inner modes of human consciousness, he brought to bear on his artistic form an Apollonian vitality by refining it into its purely intellectual essences.

THE QUEST

In *Roderick Hudson* Henry James focuses the idea of refinement on the achievement of an integral self, which is necessarily a straining after an integration of the mind and the spirit. How the mind and the spirit can achieve a high degree of ultimate refinement in their own particular spheres, and yet prove unredemptive as far as the whole personality is concerned, is fully illustrated in the contrastive destinies of Roderick and Rowland. Roderick has conscience, Rowland, consciousness; conscience offers depth, but not facility which must come through a widening of consciousness. Rowland has consciousness, but lacks conscience which alone must enable him to view life steadily and wholly. Roderick and Rowland must be at once each himself and also the other, for only then the complete artist would emerge.

Leon Edel remarks:

> it is as if Henry James had carefully divided his artist self into the two characters: Rowland is the restrained, suppressed American in James, all decorous caution and New England conscience. He has taste, appreciation, and the artistic temperament - but he is not an artist. Roderick is the artist side of James all flame and passion, yet rendered ineffectual by the very fear of his own intensities. Roderick seems to represent all that Henry James was within, but could not allow himself to be or do.[1]

Like Roderick, Henry James takes a plunge into the very depths of life with the Rowland in him mounting guard over his behaviour and holding it by a leash. With his intellectual refinement he would learn the art of being involved and uninvolved at one and the same time. America was hardly the right place for the artist; James felt that as an artist his development, although radically American, lay organically in Europe. He must have felt a pang at leaving "an American day, an American landscape, an American atmosphere" which he loved dearly. Rowland wistfully remarks, "I shall accuse myself of having slighted them."[2] Viewed as an American novel, *Roderick Hudson* is the story of an innocent American brought up in moral abstractions in quest of experience in the Europe of antiquity, of art and culture, of traditions and manners. The American comes to grief, James seems to say, not because Europe is wicked, but because his own consciousness and sensibility are unrefined and undeveloped through the inhibition of a conscience which is too timorous to launch out the self on the tides of cultural intensity. A consciousness which lacks refine-

ment, moral, intellectual, or spiritual, is doomed to suffering and destruction.

Roderick's tragedy is the tragedy of an artist who fails to comprehend or exercise intellectual refinement as an aesthetic absolute. A devoted artist should have the refinement of the mind in order to foresee the pitfalls of blind and passionate involvement. While being intensely aware of the fruits of deeply involved and felt experiences, the artist should have the patient detachment of the intellect in order to concretise his assimilated experiences into the illuminations of artistic reality. Commenting on James's presentation of the successful artist in his fiction, Maurice Beebe remarks that the successful artist in James's fiction is almost always seen with his back turned, which is a symbol of the detachment required for success.[3] Roderick has the flair for "the simple, sensuous, confident relish of pleasure" but he is without the salutary detachment born of intellectual refinement. No artist should be a slave to his passions, but Roderick is. Cultivation of passions by an artist is not in itself a bad thing, but over-indulgence in them is definitely harmful. Rowland rightly remarks, "a man of genius owes as much deference to his passions as any other, but not a particle more."[4] In fine, "nothing in excess" should be the motto for the artist.

Roderick is launched into the world by his patron, Rowland, and thrown into the midst of temptations in order that he might make "love to opportunity" and refine his consciousness and sensibility for artistic excellence. But the opportunities that come his way are wasted, for Roderick is not a master of his passions. Torn between the pulls of art on one side and passion on the other, Roderick allows himself to be swept away and destroyed by his passion. The artist is better without excesses of emotion and passion. Poor Roderick is caught in a whirlpool of emotions and passions from which he is unable to escape, because he is by nature very passionate and emotional, and to this is added the "stimulus of strong emotion" and "precarious passion". Furthermore, he has "a large capacity for ruin", and the result is that, although he has genius, he is rendered sterile as an artist by his negative qualities. No artist could afford to be egotistical, for that would spoil "the essential good health of the sincere imagination", but Roderick is egotistical, cruel and obstinate. An artist with intellectual refinement possesses a consciousness which is highly sensitive, sympathetic and at the same time, objective and

dispassionate. Hudson is not industrious, purposeful and sincere. Instead of hammering away at his profession with exemplary diligence when his golden mood is gone, he takes to riotous living. He does not have the wisdom, which comes from refinement of the mind, to realise that the artist is great in relation to the strength of his confirmed purpose and acquired will-power. Rowland warns him of the dangers of a life of coarse and vulgar sensations for an artist. He says, "don't play such dangerous games with your facility. If you have got facility, respect it, nurse it, adore it, save it up."[5] But the warning is lost on Hudson who knows his weaknesses, but does not have the strength of mind to overcome them. He knows that he is "damnably suspectible, by nature, to the grace and the beauty, and the mystery of women",[6] and yet he does not make any attempt to protect his integrity as an artist.

Roderick has imagination and creative ability, but is without self-control which only a refined mind could give. He knows that he is leading a dangerous life for an artist. At Geneva, he remoresefully tells Rowland that "he had done with the flesh and devil and was counting the hours till he should re-enter the true temple of his faith".[7] He realises the sanctity of the life of an artist and his own transgressions of it. But he is too egoistical and passionate to make his reformation a permanent one. When he comes to Rome fresh from his New England village, where opportunities for self-indulgence are non-existent, Roderick is pure in spirit and idealistic in his aspirations. He makes statues of sheer loveliness and perfection. Ugliness enters his consciousness when he finds in Euprope unlimited opportunities to gratify his ego and passions. He runs after opportunities for self-indulgence and lets go the wonderful opportunities which Europe offers for his development as an artist. Europe is not to blame if Roderick chooses to take what is evil in her. He thus misses artistic greatness for want of refinement. Life deals severely with an artist who comes to it, not as a conqueror, but as a slave of its passions.

Roderick, being what he is, "with a large capacity for ruin", would have brought ruin upon himself even in his New England village. The fault is not in this particular country or that, but in Roderick himself. His want of intellectual refinement is driven home in the episode, in which Mr. Leavenworth approaches Roderick to commission a "representation in pure white marble of the idea of intellectual

refinement."[8] Roderick, as an artist, has made only statues of great beauty because he has seen and felt beauty with all the consciousness of his being. But, intellectual refinement is an idea with which he is unfamiliar, because he himself does not have it. The statue he makes is not a success. Mr. Leavenworth is not satisfied with it because Roderick, the artist, has not succeeded in bringing out the idea effectively. He says, "Intellectual Refinement, there should be no mistaking the intellect, symbolised by an unmistakably thoughtful brow."[9] Roderick has failed because he himself does not know what it is to have a thoughtful brow. He is unaware of the refinement which the intellect can give to the artist. He undoubtedly has genius as an artist, but mere genius without the graces of the mind can at best produce a few flashes in the pan, and nothing more. His temperament and character are against his becoming a great artist. Egoism has blunted the edge of his intellect so much that he is conscious only of himself and his passionate needs, and totally unaware of the sacrifices and sufferings of his patron, Rowland, and of his own relations. The realisation that he has been selfish and cruel comes to him when Rowland condemns him as a heartless egoist. He confesses, "Certainly, I've been damnably stupid. Is n't an artist supposed to be a man of fine perception? I've n't, as it turns out, had one."[10]

Roderick has failed as an artist, and as a human being, for want of fine perception, and once he is aware of his shortcoming, he decides not to be a stumbling block and a source of suffering and unhappiness to his friends. The failure of Roderick is due to the failure of his intellectual sensibility which is unrefined and undeveloped. One can easily understand Christina's strange behaviour towards Roderick. She understands his weakness and is disappointed with him. She is fascinated by his personality and genius, but is repelled by his weakness. Even the perverse Christina evidently knows the strength which a refined intellect could give to an individual. She knows the advantages of a refined mind, for as she remarks, "We make debts for clothes and champagne but we can't spend a sou on our poor benighted minds. And yet... I really like things for the mind."[11] She has sized up Roderick's intellectual weakness and she feels sorry for his being weak with all his genius as an artist. She, therefore, understands that Rowland is the stronger and more masculine of the two. No wonder it is that she insists on Rowland telling her his opinion of her. She admires Rowland's "measured mind" and pities poor Roderick for being "weak". The intensity, sympathy and objectivity of great

art, James says, are the result of a genius which is enriched by intellectual refinement. Roderick's spiritual refinement, which enables him to feel and respond to the beauty and sanctity of things, is helpless without the refinement of the mind, which alone could have given his art detachment and power. His moral awareness is only a temporary truce which art has made with life; but it fails to lead him to that obstinate finality of life and art bound up in the nut-shell of Permanent Truth.

Rowland, on the contrary, has intellectual refinement and moral passion, but is without the refinement of the spirit. Cecilia pays a handsome compliment to Rowland's refinement and manners. She says that Rowland has "a turn for doing nice things and behaving yourself properly. You have it, in the first place, in your character. You mean, if you will pardon my putting it so, thoroughly well. Ask Bessie if you don't hold her more gently and comfortably than any of her other admirers." And Bessie declares, "He holds me more comfortably than Hudson."[12] Rowland's superiority over Hudson lies in his refinement and manners. Rowland is intelligent, well informed and has a discriminating generosity. He is rich and unoccupied and believes that "you're expected not to run your course without having done something handsome for your fellowmen."[13] His rich father, a strict Puritan, had trained him in abstinent habits, and his Puritan bent of mind draws him away from self-indulgence of any kind. He is intellectually refined enough to be aware of his own limitations. He lacks "the prime requisite of an expert *flaneur* - the simple, sensuous confident relish of pleasure."[14] The glow of happiness for him, he believes "must be found either in action of some thoroughly keen kind on behalf of an idea or in producing a masterpiece in one of the arts."[15] Happiness for him as an artist is ruled out because he is not an artist - "he could only buy pictures and not paint them."[16] He would very much have liked to have been born a vigorous young man of genius without a penny, but as it is he is just a young man of wealth and refinement. So it is natural that he envies the happy youth who in a New England village, without help or encouragement, without models or examples, had found it so easy to make lovely statues. Since he cannot enjoy artistic happiness, he can derive happiness by engaging himself "in action of some thoroughly keen kind on behalf of an idea." Rowland realises that here was an opportunity for him to fulfil his own ambitions vicariously in the art of Roderick. By assisting Roderick, he would have the pleasure and satisfaction of helping an artist achieve his fulfilment, and, more important than that, this act of his would give

"at least a reflected usefulness" to his life for offering Roderick his opportunity. Praise for Roderick's artistic excellence would indirectly mean praise for Rowland himself.

With enthusiasm Rowland initiates his project of transforming Roderick into a great artist. Cecilia wonders that "for a man who's generally averse to meddling" Rowland is "suddenly rather officious." James makes it clear that Rowland by nature is not a meddler, but that in this instance Rowland has thrown his scruples to the winds, despite the advice of Cecilia to let Hudson alone, and despite Rowland's own conviction that "the artist is better for a quiet life." The behaviour of Rowland is puzzling to Cecilia because she does not understand that Rowland is seeking fulfilment of his own aspirations in the person of Roderick Hudson. The first statues of Roderick are a success and Rowland is happy and satisfied with Roderick and himself. Rowland is badly shaken when he realises that Roderick as an artist and as a man is incomplete. Roderick is temperamental, impulsive, selfish and passionate. He does not have the refinement of the mind to be aware of things in their proper perspective. Spiritual refinement, which enables the artist to passionately respond to beauty, without the controlling power of intellectual refinement is exposed to dangers and temptations; and intellectual fineness without spiritual refinement is unproductive. It is unfortunate that, between Rowland and Roderick, each does not have what the other has. Rowland finds himself interfering in the personal life of Roderick when he realises that he is deeply in love with Mary Garland who is sincerely devoted to Roderick. The golden mood of creation deserts Roderick completely when his infatuation for Christina becomes worse. Rowland has to confess to Mrs. Hudson and Mary that Roderick is an "unexpected failure." He realises that his idea had taken shape only to be shattered by Roderick's perversity and wildness.

Rowland does not have the spiritual refinement or awareness to make allowances for unpredictable elements in human nature and behaviour. He does not give up or abandon his idea, but shows remarkable patience and charity in the hope that Roderick would somehow come to his senses. His patience snaps ultimately when Roderick accuses him of being stupid and insensitive to Christina's affection and regard for him. He thereupon condemns Roderick as a heartless egoist. and this denunciation leads to Roderick's suicide. He realises that he should have left Roderick alone and not meddled with his life. He has

committed the "unpardonable sin" of interfering in the life of a fellow human being, all for the sake of an idea of "reflected usefulness" to his own life. He has been, all along, aware of his interference in Roderick's life, and had been amazed at his own temerity when he reflected "that he was really meddling with the simple stillness of this small New England home, and that he had ventured to disturb so much living security in the interest of a far-away fantastic hypothesis."[17]

Rowland persists with his folly because the hypothesis of "reflected usefulness" takes hold of him so firmly that he cannot abandon it for his own fulfilment. His hypothesis is so precious to him that he is callous in his disregard of the freedom and sanctity of human life. What Roderick resents most is that he is not given the freedom to live his life. He tells Rowland, "You seem to have taken the measure of my liberty with extraordinary minuteness."[18] He argues "I'm not a small boy nor a country lout any longer. and whatever I do I do with my eyes open. When I do well the merit's my own; if I do ill the fault's my own."[19] This reveals incidentally that moral responsibility is a fruitful ingredient in the artist's education. Roderick wants to feel that he is his own master and responsible only to himself. He wants freedom to shape his career, and as an artist he knows the value and sanctity of his freedom. Men should be allowed to "live on their own terms and according to their own inexorable needs."[20] Do not play the Creator, James says, to your fellow human beings; respect the individual's life and liberty. He, who could do nothing about his own destiny, presumes to shape the destiny of an innocent man and in the process destroys him altogether. Rowland Mallet's name is significant as the mallet is an instrument with which things are beaten into a shape. Mallet tries to beat his hypothesis into a shape, thereby involving an innocent man in suffering and death. A man of intellectual refinement and moral ardour commits a spiritual blunder by underestimating the liberty of the individual and the sancity of human life. It is no wonder, therefore, that Rowland, the most rational of men, in the end lashes his conduct "with a scourge of steel, accusing it of cruelty and injustice," for he has learnt a lesson in spiritual refinement.

Roderick Hudson thus establishes the Jamesian universe of discourse within two opposing, and yet mutually complementary patterns of refinement, intellectual and spiritual. How to reconcile

them into a whole view of life is the problem with which Henry James becomes increasingly preoccupied in the succeeding works.

In *Roderick Hudson,* James emphasizes the need for intellectual refinement for an artist, and spiritual refinement for well-meaning patrons. Without detachment and self-control, art becomes self-defeating; without an awareness of the sanctity of human life and liberty, benevolence becomes meddling interference. In *The American,* Henry James equates the states and gradations of refinement with nobility of character, "high civilisation", magnanimous self-sacrifice and renunciation. The international theme helps James to throw the virtues of American character into sharp relief in the 'mores' of European environment. When he wrote *The American,* James was still a "concentrated patriot" and not a forthgoing cosmopolite: the novel is generally regarded as James's defence of his countrymen.[22] Christopher Newman is the representative of his race. His sterling qualities are the inherent qualities of all noble Americans. James's early attitude towards Europe was quite in conformity with the American tradition, for it was one of prejudice against, and distrust of, transatlantic "high civilisation".

James's idea of human refinement is projected in this novel which he himself calls a "romance". His depiction of Europe as wicked and pretentious should not, however, be interpreted to mean that James regards evil as a special attribute of Europe and virtue as the special monopoly of America. James was aware of the all-pervading nature of evil in human life. Evil is ominipresent, and James was aware of the evil in American life and was as vehemently critical of it. Evil which comes in the way of human refinement is nevertheless a necessary experience, for it is the knowledge of evil which matures and perfects the refining process. But for his encounter with evil, Newman would be not have acquired the moral and spiritual refinement necessary for his final gesture of magnanimity. Life is a kind of quest for purification or refinement. The exposure of James's heroes and heroines to evil undoubtedly involves their human individuality in pain and suffering, but the outcome, the refined consciousness, represents an ultimate victory. Newman comes to Europe as an epicure bent on enjoying the treasures of Europe, but leaves it as a stoic with a knowledge of evil and with a refined moral sense. This refinement of Newman "produces a fineness of response that counterbalances the anguish of humiliation and loss."[23]

Newman is a 'new man' on European soil. He is a fine man, physically, intellectually, and morally. Through honest toil and resourcefulness he has made enough money to "rest a while, to see the world, to have a good time to improve my mind, and if the fancy takes me to marry a wife."[24] He had served in the Civil War, but had realised as a man of refinement that war was barbarous and inhuman. As a businessman he had experienced bitter failures as well as brilliant triumphs. He is rich, but is conscious that there are more things in life than the mere making of money. He is a lover of art and of music. He says, "I have come to see Europe, to get the best out of it. I want to see all the great things."[25] He is frank and innocent, and is not "the great Western Barbarian, stepping forth in his innocence and might, gazing a while at this poor effete Old World, and then swooping down on it."[26] He protests that he is not a barbarian - "I am a highly civilised man."[27] The proof of his being a civilised man, or of his refinement, is his quest for self-improvement. He is tired of making money and his innate moral sense is shocked by the treacheries and betrayals of business. One of his friends had played a mean trick on him, but Newman had nobly forgiven him and had scorned the idea of revenge. He has made over his business to one of his associates, and is doubtful of his ever going back to it. James makes it clear that it was by the honest sweat of his brow that Newman had made his fortune, and not by deception, or treachery. Valentin envies Newman's poise and self-confidence. "It is a sort of air you have of being thoroughly at home in the world."[28]

Newman is rich, easy of manner, self-confident, intelligent, perceptive, and has a spontaneous moral sense. 'The complex Parisian World about him' is a simple affair to him because he has not as yet experienced the evil and moral ugliness in its life. 'Swimming in a rapture of respect', he sees all the important places in Europe. He dreams of marrying a magnificent woman. His quest for a magnificent wife is symbolically a quest for refinement. His dream comes true when he meets Claire through the good offices of Mrs. Tristram. Claire is beautiful, elegant, clever, gentle, kind and charitable. She is "a mixture of pride and humility, of the eagle and the dove."[29] Newman falls in love with her, "the luminous sweetness of her eyes, the delicate mobility of her face, the deep liquidity of her voice filled all his consciousness."[30] Newman finds his image of a perfect woman in Claire. But marrying her is not a simple affair. She belongs to one of the oldest aristocratic families of France, and the ambition of

her mother is to marry her daughter into a similar old aristocratic family of wealth and power. The Bellegardes are proud, strange and suave in their manners. But manners, James says, are not morals, and aristocratic birth is no proof of 'high civilisation'. James makes in *The American* a distinction between the 'natural aristocracy' of Newman based on merit and the 'artificial aristocracy' of the Bellegardes based on the accident of birth.[31] This contrast between dynastic aristocracy and individualistic aristocracy properly Americanises James's theme of refinement by relating it unconsciously to the Jeffersonian versus Hamiltonian discourse of the Natural Law, which is at the very root of the democratic self-image of American culture.

Valentin boasts of his noble ancestry and tells Newman that marriage between a French nobleman's daughter and an American businessman is impossible and unthinkable, for such an alliance imperils the honour of the family. Newman disagrees with Valentin; it is not birth which confers nobility on man but intrinsic refinement of character. He says, "But I say I am noble. I don't exactly know what you mean by it, but it is a fine word and a fine idea. I put in a claim to it".[32] Valentin, however, believes that Newman's millions might work wonders. The Bellegardes, noblemen as they are, are no proof against the temptations of Mammon. Newman is allowed to court Claire as a suitor. The Bellegardes treat him all along with furtive pride and cold civility. Newman is successful, and it is announced that Claire has favoured him. Claire's acceptance of Newman is viewed with disfavour by the mother and the elder son, who go back on their word to Newman that they would do nothing to antagonise Claire against him. Claire is coerced into giving up Newman, and he is informed that an alliance with a 'commercial person' is impossible in the context of their right to uphold their family dignity. Newman feels the impact of evil with all its force and loses his moral balance. He is intensely disappointed and frustrated, and is furious with the Bellegardes for their deception and hypocrisy. Valentin, just before his death, hints at a crime committed by his mother and brother. Newman wrests the secret from Mrs. Bread, bent as he is on taking revenge on the Bellegardes. The marquise and her eldest son are guilty of the murder of the father. The old marquis's note accusing his wife of murdering him falls into the hands of Newman. Behind the mask of manners and ceremony, Newman discovers moral ugliness and treachery. The so-called 'high civilisation' of aristocracy is nothing but a gilded surface beneath which is hidden foul corruption

and treachery. The Bellegardes are now at the mercy of Newman who threatens to divulge the secret to the world. He nourishes the idea of revenge so long as his disturbed moral sense does not regain its balance. But Christopher Newman, a Christopher Columbus of his true American self, soon rediscovers his moral virtue as an American. His moral sense, after performing a 'somersault', regains its balance. He is ashamed of his ever having conceived the idea of hurting even his enemies now in his pcwer. He refrains from damning others, even as Rowland does not refrain from saving others. This difference measures the progress of human types in terms of refinement from *Roderick Hudson* to *The American*.

Newman is one of 'nature's noblemen' and in his encounter with the 'artificial' French aristocratic noblemen, the prize of being the 'morally most refined' goes to him. At the social level, James says, refinement of manners does not mean an exterior of suave manners without morals. Refined manners are the "outward signs of an inner spiritual grace". High civilisation is that in which manners are tempered and enriched by morals. Newman's noble rejection of revenge and gain reveals his refinement, in which one sees a combination of such rare qualities as magnanimity, charity, kindness and forgiveness. Valentin is right when he remarks that Paris quickens one's wits, and it ends by "teaching one a refinement of observations."[33] Newman has come to Paris and learnt a lesson in the refinement of perception. He acquires a knowledge of the ominipresent and irremediable evil in human life. He realises that even in the midst of Parisian evil there is virtue in such persons as Valentin and Claire. In them Newman finds aristocratic polish and dignity combined with moral fervour. But like all good people they too are the helpless victims of irremediable evil. Valentin is a Bellegarde and is proud of his family. In fact he loses his life in the observance of one of the much-respected conventions of French aristocratic life. But Valentin is aware of the evil and treachery in his family, and is ashamed of it. He dies apologising to Newman for the treacherous behaviour of his mother and brother.

Claire and Valentin are alike in their hatred of hypocrisy and in their opposition to evil and treachery. No wonder that they like each other very much. Claire too feels sorry for the betrayal of Newman, whom she likes and respects; yet she is aware of the irresistible power of irrational evil in human life. Valentin says of her, "I have never

seen a woman half so perfect or so complete. She has everything; that is all I can say about her."[34] Her name itself "suggests a halo; Claire de Citre - an arch of light - a lighted window, the bright window through which the reader peers towards perfection."[35] Newman sees in her an image of refinement, but unfortunately for both, Claire finds herself helpless in the face of the evil which has a firm hold on her. Unable to reconcile herself to a life of evil and sin, she renounces the world to become a Carmelite nun. Claire's life is yet another example of the helplessness of refinement in a hostile world of evil, corruption and moral ugliness. Like Newman, she also realises that the quality of refinement is not strained, and that it lies in giving, sacrificing and renouncing.

The American is thus a study in the varying degrees and modes of refinement. Refinement, according to James, does not mean a modification of the obstinate facts of life but the acquirement of a mode of seeing them and comprehending them. To know the relativity of good and evil and the shifting postures of the realities of human existence is to acquire that awareness of life which makes for refinement.

In *The Europeans*, James reverses the international theme with the purpose of throwing light on the deficiencies in the American culture. Americans like Roderick Hudson, Rowland Mallet and Newman come to grief in Europe on account of their inadequate consciousness, which is a legacy from their culture. James deals with the limitations of the American attitude to life which cuts at the very roots of the individual's desire for, and experience of refinement. Experience is the crucible in which the process of refinement takes place, and the American's fear of opportunities for experience results in a warped and undeveloped sensibility, The refinement of an individual's sensibility is possible only in a culture in which there are unlimited opportunities for the varying experiences of cultured life. 'Cloistered virtue' which is fostered by the Puritan American culture is no real virtue, in as much as it has not come to grips with, and triumphed over evil.

In *The Europeans,* James contrasts the American and the European attitudes to life. The Americans (the Wentworths) regard life as a discipline, and the Europeans (Eugenia and Felix) regard it as an opportunity. The Wentworths have money, liberty and a 'position',

but they take 'a painful view of life'. They believe that life is a discipline whereby one is schooled in abstaining from taking a full plunge into the depths of life. Their consciousness is so undeveloped and stunted as to make them think that the enjoyment of life goes hand in hand with wickedness, To Wentworth, refinement means keeping one's self pure by running away from experience for fear of contamination and corruption. He does not understand that experience and involvement are necessary for the development of a flexible consciousness which can absorb the varying realities of human existence and take them in his stride. Only Gertrude Wentworth appreciates the need for experience and involvement. Her falling in love with Felix Young is an affirmation of her enthusiasm for a fully lived life.

Felix believes in taking life as it comes to him without ever being afraid of the dangers of involvement. The nature of the future life of Felix and Gertrude as man and wife would depend on their individual intellectual and moral resources. James pokes gentle fun at Wentworth's rigid and angular view of life. Wentworth's son Clifford, is suspended from college for his addiction to alcohol, and the father is unhappy and greatly concerned about the boy. Clifford is promptly sent to Mr. Brand, the Unitarian minister, to learn the virtues of temperance. Felix advises Wentworth to send Clifford to Eugenia, for he believes in the civilising and sobering influence of women on men. Felix's belief is basically correct, although it is hasty to generalise that all women are civilising influences. Eugenia with all her brilliance and polish is a corrupting influence. She abuses the virtues of European culture by using them as instruments of deception and greedy acquisition. Robert Acton sees through her false nature and drops the idea of marrying her. For the American, life is a tale of missed or deliberately ignored opportunities; for the European, life is a tale of abuse of opportunities. James says that the refined consciousness of a refined culture would regard life as an opportunity leavened with discipline and awareness.

In *The Europeans,* James hints at the civilizing and sobering influence of women on men. In *Confidence,* he comes out with the discovery that the sharp sensibility of a woman of intelligence and sympathy is yet another source of human refinement. Bernard and Gordon are very good friends. Gordon falls in love with Angela Vivian in Baden-Baden, and summons Bernard for his opinion of the girl.

Bernard hastens to his friend and discovers that Vivian is the same girl whose portrait he had accidentally drawn in Siena. He studies the girl and, finding her encouraging him, concludes that she is a coquette. He warns Gordon against the pitfalls of his marriage with a coquettish girl. Despite his warning and advice, Gordon proposes to Angela and is rejected by her. Gordon then leaves for America where he marries Blanche Ever, a friend of the Vivian. Blanche is pretty, but silly. Bernard visits the East and during his sojourn learns of the marriage of Gordon. He returns to New York and finds that Gordon and Blanche are not happy.

Bernard leaves for Europe where he once again comes across Angela in France. All along he had been feeling wretched that he had wronged Angela by giving an unfavourable account of her to Gordon and thus depriving her of her marriage with Gordon. At Balanquas, Bernard discovers that he himself has been in love with Vivian for sometime. Things are clarified by Vivian, and Bernard realises his utter folly. He proposes to her and is accepted by her. Gordon now steps in and, learning that Bernard was engaged to Angela, accuses Bernard of betrayal of confidence. The two good friends fall out because of a misunderstanding over Angela. Angela, however, sets out to reconcile them with her tact, gentleness and admirable discernment. The abominable passion of love has reduced the sensible Gordon to the "level of infamy". In spite of his scientific bent of mind, Gordon is unable to find an honourable way out of a difficult situation. Bernard is so loyal to the canons of ideal friendship that he is insensitive to the fact that Angela was in love with himself. Angela is right when she says that "men are so stupid; it is only women that have real discernment."[36] Angela is a wonderful judge of character; she realises that both Gordon and Blanche are in love with each other but because of a misunderstanding and lack of goodwill they believed that they hated each other. Once this becomes clear to her, she seeks to remove the misunderstanding between them and lays firm foundations of mutual affection and goodwill. Gordon is made to realise his mistake and apologise to Bernard for his hasty accusation of the latter. The friends are reconciled, and their eyes are opened to their lack of perception. Intelligent feminine sensibility, James says, is so sharp and acute as to possess remarkable powers of perception. Refined feminine sensibility is the answer to the problem of refining human relations.

If, in *The Europeans,* Gertrude marries the Europeanised Felix Young for possibilities of refinement, Isabel Archer in *The Portrait of a Lady* achieves refinement in Europe through tragic conflict, suffering, and awareness. Refinement, which implies equability, clear comprehension, and awareness, is possible only in the context of unlimited possibilities for experience; and so it is that the heroes and heroines of James enact their quest in Europe unceasingly. James's central figures are 'full vessels of consciousness' on whom 'nothing is lost'. Endowed with intelligence, imagination, sensibility, perception, and a spontaneous moral sense, they expose themselves, eagerly and confidently, to the impact of living experience.

Isabel Archer is the first American girl in the novels of Henry James to launch upon the quest for refinement through a conscious living of her experience. In the light of the refinement which she finally achieves, her return to her husband is not in the least improbable. The mistake she commits and the anguish, misery and disillusionment she suffers become insignificant when compared with what she gains by way of insight into human nature, and an awareness of man's predicament in a hostile world of evil, of conventions and traditions, of superficial manners and treacheries. To err is human, and James's 'super.subtle fry' are no exceptions to this great truth. Their morality, intelligence, imagination, and sensibility are no proof against the follies of fallen men. The Jamesian protagonists, too, are victims of bewilderments, uncertainties and confusions like their erring brethren.

The suffering of James's heroes and heroines is of a kind which is peculiar to the highly perceptive, the highly sensitive, and the highly intelligent. Isabel Archer, like Christopher Newman, acquires a refinement of moral insight, which results in her acceptance of life as it really is. If suffering is illuminated by understanding, it is better that one suffers in order to understand. Understanding is refinement of consciousness raised to the level of vision. The quest for a refined mode of consciousness and existence thus gives a meaning and purpose to the human condition. The problems of the Archers and the Maggies are thus the problems of all perceptive and intelligent human beings.

Isabel Archer is an intelligent, imaginative, and sensitive girl whose passion for refinement prompts her to entertain romantic notions of life. In her innocence and ignorance, she imagines the world to be

"a place of brightness, of free expansion. of irresistible action".[37] With her great love of liberty and her intense desire for improvement, she is "always planning out her development, desiring her perfection, observing her progress".[38] Although she is not altogether unfamiliar with evil, she does not as yet 'know' its power and its dynamic centrality in human life. For her "it had been a very happy life and she had been a very fortunate person".[39] She is, however, not afraid of a knowledge of evil, and is, in fact, desirous of such knowledge, for it "appeared to Isabel that the unpleasant had been even too absent from her knowledge, for she had gathered from her acquaintance with literature that it was often a source of interest and even of instruction".[40] Knowledge of evil is necessary in as much as it is instructive, and Isabel's 'immense curiosity about life' makes her crave for a life of enriching experiences. It is natural that in Isabel's quest for refinement she desires the encouragement and kindness of an understanding husband. The only obstacle in her quest is poverty, and this is eliminated by the generosity of an intelligent and understanding cousin, Ralph Touchett.

In her 'exploration of life' for refinement are involved her suitors, Ralph Touchett, Caspar Goodwood, Lord Warburton and Osmond. Desirous of achieving, through marriage, a maximum of conscious intensity of life, Isabel weighs and considers the worth and promise of each one of the suitors. Ralph, the invalid, is easily eliminated, for in his case an active life is impossible. His invalidism is symbolic of a spectatorial aloofness from states of active participation in positive acts of good. Ralph is unrefined to the extent that his culture is an inactive gift of nature, in as much as it converts itself into moral delusion, which constitutes a subtle but definite source of moral evil. The tendency of contemplative, and therefore inactive, good is to remain aloof from involvement, thereby invalidating the good that should have otherwise been a source of growth. It is not surprising, therefore, that it is Ralph who digs the pit into which Isabel falls. The delusion that under his sympathetic and well-meaning observation Isable will find her hapiness in marriage prompts Ralph to an act of generosity which is, in a sense, responsible for her tragedy.

The lean and tall Goodwood, who has made his fortune as the owner of cotton mills, is 'not a man weakly to accept defeat'. He is in love with Isabel, who, although touched by his devotion, does not approve of his utter want of "consonance with the deeper rhythms of

life".[41] His habit of dressing in the same manner and his inclination to talk about the same thing reveal his banality and superficiality. His annoying perseverance and his undying hope of making Isabel his wife reveal a lamentable want of growth in him and a blind insensitivity to the moral growth of Isabel. Isabel thinks that Goodwood, despite his devotion and goodness, is not the man who could share her ideas regarding a refined awareness of life. Material success and goodness are not everything for a woman who values a fine consciousness most. Good, but wooden, Caspar Goodwood is incapable of perception and growth. The final physical approach of Goodwood is characteristic of a man who is oblivious of the possibility of moral growth in human beings. The elimination of Goodwood is caused by an aggressive forcing of the will which negatives the qualities of felt life.

The choice for Isabel now lies between Warburton and Osmond. The honest, sincere, and well-bred Lord Warburton is a good specimen of the English aristocracy. He is a man of elegant tastes, and with his hundred thousand a year, and his fifty thousand acres of land, he is sufficiently attractive to Isabel. Her rejection of him is once again for reasons directly related to her quest for refinement. Her intense concern for self-development makes her ask herself several times if she is not a rank egoist. She reminds herself that she should not be proud, and "nothing could be more sincere than her prayer to be delivered from such a danger; the isolation and loneliness of pride had for her mind the horror of a desert place".[42] She is anxious that her 'exploration of life' should not be mistaken for pride and egotism. It is not the hope of something greater and bigger that prompts Isabel to reject such fine men as Goodwood and Warburton, but disappointment that she has not come across the person who would understand her and participate in the experience of intellectual and spiritual growth.

The typical Englishman that he is, Lord Warburton is distrustful of 'ideas', of 'speculation', of 'criticism' and 'analysis'. He confesses that he is afraid of Isabel's 'remarkable mind' - "Do you know I'm very much afraid of it - of that remarkable mind of yours?"[43] A man who is afraid of her mind cannot be an understanding partner in her quest for refinement. Isable rejects Warburton, because marriage with him means, in her evaluation of the situation, an exemption from life, a refinement by proxy. For Isabel, who has strained the significance of life through the romantic arrasses of the self, the oblique and remote fulfilments that such a marriage can offer appear neither con-

vincing nor worth aspiring. In fine, Warburton does not meet the "demands of her imagination", and is rejected. Happiness for Isabel lies in her being herself, in her being true to her nature and aspirations, "it comes over me every now and then that I can never be happy in any extraordinary way; not by turning away, by separating myself".[44] Marrying Warburton would mean her 'turning away', her separating herself, and these she will not do, come what may. In her quest for refinement Isabel rightly desires the encouragement of an understanding husband, but she is mistaken in thinking that people are what they appear to be.

Outer elegance, taste and manners do not necessarily reveal inner beauty. The 'deep art' of Madame Merle and Gilbert Osmond misleads Isabel into thinking that they are kindred spirits in their concern for refinement. One could have a fine mind which one might use for sinister ends. A fine mind is not always employed in the service of a moral consciousness. It is this 'generous mistake', as Ralph calls it, that involves Isabel in suffering, and leads to her final 'awareness'; knowledge of evil leads to self-knowledge and understanding, which make for the refinement of an individual. Refinement lies in a knowing acceptance of life, in sacrifice and conciliation. The 'ordeal of consciousness' is the ordeal of acquiring refinement. Once Isabel comprehends this great truth, she has little hesitation in returning to her husband. The fascination, the disillusionment, and the final awareness of Isabel are depicted with great artistry by James.

Isabel's first image of Osmond is that of "a quiet, clever, sensitive, distinguished man".[45] Leading "a lonely studious life in a lovely island", he has "a care for beauty and perfection so natural and so cultivated together".[46] His air of distinction, and his being so independent, so individual, so cultivated and intelligent are qualities which appeal to Isabel most. Osmond asks Isabel to "go everywhere-do everything; get everything out of life. Be happy - be triumphant".[47] In Osmond, Isabel sees the man of her dreams, and when he proposes to her, Isabel is only too glad to accept him. Ralph disagrees with her choice, and Isabel defends herself by saying, "In everything that makes one care for people Mr. Osmond is pre-eminent. There may be nobler natures, but I've never had the pleasure of meeting one. Mr. Osmond is the finest I know: he's good enough for me, and interesting enough, and clever enough".[48] He is a poor man, "who

has borne poverty with dignity. with such indifference".[49] He is "simply a very lonely, a very cultivated and a very honest man".[50] Life for them would be a meaningful experience, because she is "remarkably fresh", and he is "remarkably well-seasoned". A certain ardour takes possession of Isabel - a sense of the earnestness of Osmond's love and a delight in his personal qualities; and she marries him. He has "all the appearance of a man living in the open air of the world, indifferent to small considerations, caring only for truth and knowledge",[51] and it is for this quality that Isabel admires Osmond most. Three years of married life open her eyes to his real nature. Behind the mask of aestheticism, taste, and suave manners is a nature, egoistical, acquisitive, cynical and diabolic. Isabel is not mistaken about the beauty of his mind, but is shocked to discover the use to which it was being put, The things about which he appeared to be indifferent are the very things which he craved most to possess. Isabel discovers that "under all his culture, his cleverness, his amity, under his good nature, his facility, his knowledge of life, his egotism lay hidden like a serpent in a bank of flowers".[52] Isabel is so fascinated by the beautiful flowers that she is oblivious of the serpent lurking in the luxurious undergrowths of the bank.

Osmond hates Isabel, because her attitude to life is the very antithesis of his own. He is furious that he has not been able to tame her mind to suit his needs and purposes. His pose of aestheticism, goodness, and indifference is assumed for an acquisitive exploitation of the world. He marries Isabel for her money, in ordar that his illegitimate daughter, Pansy, could marry well. James seems to say that aestheticism and manners are dangerous instruments of evil, if they are not allied with a basic moral soundness. A fine mind, engaging manners, and cultivated tastes are the baits with which the shrewd Osmond ensnares the innocent Isabel, who mistakes the glitter for the substance and is deceived into a loveless and fruitless marriage. Beneath Osmond's pose of refinement is the sordidness of an adulterous union with Madame Merle, and his air of indifference to normal human desires is a fiction. The impact of evil, and the consequent refinement of Isabel's consciousness, are experiences which she would cherish greatly as they have helped her moral growth. Like Emerson and Thoreau, James also believed that evil lies in preferring the world's values to one's own ; and Isabel, in rejecting the world's values, keeps the integrity of her character inviolate. The knowledge of evil is acquired through suffering, which is the fire that refines the

consciousness. Isabel acquires a finer refinement of understanding and through the ordeal of consciousness in marriage she learns to perceive the subtle processes whereby 'good' is transformed into evil when, in the exercise of a good 'nature' or a good 'sensibility', one loses sight of the ethical interrelatedness between ends and means, and moral supremacy of good means over good ends.

Isabel is typically Jamesian in discovering, like Strether in *The Ambassadors* later, that the fuller life is 'a matter of refining her consciousness by an ordeal of fire', Isabel's philosophic awareness of the complexities of human existence enable her to forget the pain and suffering, as predicted by the knowing Ralph, and to forgive the treacheries and deceptions of people like Osmond and Madame Merle. Isabel's return to her husband is, thus, both an affirmation and acceptance of life - a double acceptance of life on its own terms and on Isabel's own terms. Commenting on Isabel's moral growth and awareness, Ward remarks :

> James does nothing to minimise the suffering with which Isabel must spend the rest of her life, but he suggests that the acquired wisdom, the expansion of consciousness, represents a development far higher not only of her life in America but higher than her life with Warburton or Goodwood would have been. When Isabel partakes of the Tree of Knowledge in the world of experience she is made forcefully aware of the presence of evil, but in a sense her earlier ambitions are fulfilled. She was perhaps correct in pursuing her ideals, in accepting nothing but the fullest experience that life can offer.[53]

The quest for 'the fullest experience' is thus a quest for refinement, in which the moral idealism of Isabel remains unimpaired, despite the assaults of evil on it. The great lesson which she learns is that she should neither renounce her ideals, nor make life conform to them, and that her ultimate triumph in life is the preservation of the integrity of her character. The whole moral action of *The Portrait of a Lady* thus springs from a sharply dramatised ontology of human choice, which is fully explored in Isabel's marriage to Osmond. Isabel's refinement lies in her willing acceptance of moral responsibility, and in her determination to be true to herself.[54] The final intimation, which sets her on her chastened return, comes to her at Gardencourt, - a composite spatial metaphor of idyllic innocence and chivalric virtue - which is both a symbol of uncorrupted innocence and also a redemptive seat of

judgment, by means of which experience is transfigured into refinement. It was a self-deluded, almost romantically ignorant Isabel, who chose to marry Osmond, but it is a refined and consciously responsible Isabel who, for the second time, chooses to return to her husband. James seems to say that the polarised patterns of choice, which dominate the human personality, can be connected by the institution of marriage. The marriage-tie acquires a sanctity for Isabel because she recognizes it as the fruit of moral choice and responsibility. Maggie Verver, in *The Golden Bowl*, faces a similar situation, and acquires a similar refinement of her consciousness. What happens to Isabel after her return to her husband is not known, but as James indicates, she has already become transfigured as the 'heiress of all ages'. For in the redeemed, self-redeemed Isabel, the refinement of consciousness is completed in such a manner that the stage is set for the promptitude of the spirit to meet the possibilities of the self, and for the readiness of the self to yield to the intimations of the spirit, and for the united readiness of both to reach forth the yet winder adventures of life, the world and the universe, whereby cumulative error becomes transformed into a consolidated virtue of vision.

James hints at the truth that the absence of refinement makes one's culture an inactive gift of nature which can easily convert itself into moral delusion and further into active evil. The total absence of moral awareness in Osmond makes it difficult for one to suppose that Isabel would still make a success of her marriage. The Prince, on the contrary, in *The Golden Bowl*, makes it possible for Maggie to reform him by his accessibility to moral infuence. Isabel's dark sojourn back to her husband is thus the beginning of other possible journeys into light which Henry James traces in the later novels.

Refinement for the Jamesian protagonists lies in their acquiring a knowledge of the truth of life. The questing protagonists are awakened to the infinite possibilities of the self, and to the importance of their being true to it. Henry James projects the idea of refinement in the early novels in terms of the intense awareness, achieved by his protagonists, of the fact that one could brave the world and its disasters by keeping one's selfhood unmutilated and placing it continuously in the difficult but exquisite possibility of attaining self-knowledge. Refinement is enhancement and expansion of consciousness through experience, whereby one learns to be true to oneself. For the heroes and heroines of James, happiness - not in a material, but

in a moral and spiritual sense - lies in their being faithful to their character or nature. Where there is a betrayal of the self, either because of one's own deficiencies, or because of forces over which one has no control, self-destruction or suicide becomes a tragic necessity. It is the betrayal of his artistic self, through his bondage to his passions, which prompts Roderick to commit suicide. Newman remains true to himself by magnanimously rejecting the idea of revenge. Prompted by fidelity to her true self, Gertrude marries Felix, and not Mr. Brand. Angela opens the eyes of Gordon to the requirements of his nature, and thereby ensures his happiness. Isabel returns to her husband, respecting the choice she had made according to the dictates of her nature.

THE ORDEAL

In *The Bostonians, The Princess Casamassima, The Reverberator,* and *The Tragic Muse,* the awakened self of the Jamesian protagonist faces an ordeal, in which he is required to make a choice between the possibilities of his own self and those of the world outside. Discovering no integrity in the world outside, he falls back upon the resources of his own self and reaffirms its integrity.

In *The Bostonians* and *The Princess Casamassima,* in which Henry James reveals his social awareness, he continues to deal with the theme of self-knowledge and refinement, but now in an atmosphere of reform and revolution. In these two novels, he dramatises the conflict in individuals who have committed themselves to causes to which they are, by their very natures, opposed. Loyalty to the cause would invariably mean self-betrayal, which is worse than suicide for the Jamesian protagonists.

The theme of *The Bostonians* is the progression of the simple and good-natured Verena towards self-knowledge and refinement. The charm and goodness of Verena make her pre-eminently eligible for rescue from the life to which she has committed herself. Her devotion to the feminist cause is more the result of her unwillingness to displease Olive than of her sincere conviction. But for Olive, Verena would not have cared very much for female suffrage. Endowed by nature with a beautiful smile, "which fell impartially on every one, man and woman alike", and by nature "enchantingly and universally genial,"[1] Verena is committed to a cause which is fundamentally anti-male, and which is thus an attempt on her part to hoodwink her own nature. In trying to be what she is not, Verena is unfaithful to her own nature. She assumes a mask for the sake of a movement, which by itself is not a bad one, but becomes perverse in the hands of eccentrics and neurotics like Mrs. Farrinder, Olive Chancellor and Ada T. P. Foat. Henry James is not so much repudiating reform as exposing how reform degenerates into a moronic pursuit of vulgar excitement, when it is championed by deluded and repressed individuals.

James reveals the perversions to which human nature is exposed in the exciting but sultry world of the feminist movement. Describing Basil's impressions of Olive Chancellor, James observes, "what Basil Ransom actually perceived was that Miss Chancellor was a signal old maid. That was her quality, her destiny, nothing could be more distinctly written... She was a spinster as Shelley was a lyric poet or as the month of August is sultry."[2] James compares a meeting of Olive's sisterhood to a rendezvous of witches on the Brocken. The leaders of the movement are haters of men, and are totally devoid of feminine grace and charm. The good heroines of James are trouble-shooters, to whom contention and unpleasantness are anathema. But, to Olive Chancellor, contention is most welcome. She meddles with the life of Verena, for she suffers from the saviour complex; "I want to enter the lives of women who are lonely, who are piteous, I want to be near to them to help them."[3] Like the governess in *The Turn of the Screw*, Olive Chancellor is morally deluded, in as much as she is unable to discriminate between what is natural and good and what is unnatural and evil.

Moral delusion is a source of evil, and the impact of this evil is felt in all its full force by Verena, who is for a time deluded into renouncing her true nature. Verena realises the spiritual domination exercised by Olive over herself. "The fine web of authority, of dependence, that her strenuous companion had woven about her was now as dense as a suit of golden mail."[4] She feels "Olive's grasp too clinching, too terrible."[5] Forces, to which her feminine nature responds readily, pull Verena towards Basil whom she loves. "She was in love - she felt it in every throb of her being."[6] To be true to her nature, Verena has to flee from Olive, the arch-champion of the feminist movement. The restrictive exclusiveness of reform renders every generous act a partial good and hence inactive to the point of being an evil meddling with the free processes of nature.

Mrs. Farrinder, the great apostle of the emancipation of women, lectures on temperance and the rights of women, and her goals are "to give the ballot to every woman in the country and to take the flowing bowl from every man."[7] Even the good old Miss Birdseye, in whom the New England humanitarianism still survives, sometimes wished 'the blacks back in bondage' for the sake of excitement. James seems to say that the reformers are more interested, though unwittingly, in vulgar excitement than in the women's cause. James's

own interest in the novel is not so much the social degeneration of post-civil war Boston, which he nonetheless records truthfully, as the effect of this degeneration on the life and sensibility of a young and innocent girl. Basil Ransom is able to see through the social corruption and realise the danger which Verena is facing. A "young man of first-rate intelligence," Basil Ransom perceives the diabolic intention of Olive to wean Verena away from her true nature for her own ends. "He stood appalled for a moment, as he said to himself, that she would take her up and the girl would be ruined."[8]

Basil deplores the 'feminization' of his age. Doting, desexed men dance attendance on perverse, oversexed women; Selah Tarrant is 'a kind of shaman doing sexual service... to deprived Boston ladies'; Mathias Pardon is 'the castrate priest of the huge idol of publicity';[9] and Burrage is ruled tyrannically by his mother. Basil is sorry that 'the whole generation is womanised', that it is an age 'of false delicacy and coddled sensibilities.' Basil is determined to preserve 'the masculine character' and his final victory over Olive Chancellor is a victory of the natural over the perverse and the unnatural. It is characteristic Jamesian irony that a Southerner rescues Verena from Olive Chancellor, to whom she has been literally sold by Verena's parents.

Basil believes that home is the proper sphere of women, and James seems to agree with him. The duty of women is to make themselves agreeable to men, which is "a truth as old as the human race."[10] For the affectionate and charming Verena the home of Basil is the proper sphere. Happiness lies in one being true to one's self, irrespective of what might happen in the process. Significantly enough, James ends the novel with the remark that marriage will not staunch the tears of Verena. Marriage is not a bed of roses, but that is no reason why a charming young woman should be afraid of it, when it is such a natural bond between men and women. Refinement, then, for Verena lies in her realization that she should be true to her nature, for to be anything else is to be less than 'kind', and hence a step away from the refinement of nature. And her triumph over the fear of experience constitutes an initiation of the self into the world of reality which is not denatured by the removal of pain and suffering, but is placed in the possibility of redemption through conscious self-refinement.

In *The Princess Casamassima,* Henry James further explores the theme of refined self-awareness. The uneasy world of revolution and financial depression of the '80's is the back-drop for the drama that is enacted in the consciousness of a man who is all sensibility. The tragedy of Hyacinth Robinson is the tragedy of a man who commits himself to a cause in haste and then realises how repulsive it is to his own 'self'. The act of violence, which Hyacinth is called upon to perform, is in reality a murder of that true nature of his, which responds spontaneously and fully to the rhythms of aristocratic life. His suicide is not only an escape from the hateful necessity of betraying his own self, but is the culminating gesture which an intensely felt life makes in affirmation of refinement as the total engagement of the human personality in experience and awareness.

The division of the self in Hyacinth is the cumulative result of forces which influence his growth. Hyacinth is an artist with a clear and sensitive intelligence, and endowed with an imagination 'which will always give him the clue about everything.' His sharp insight, and his capacity for selfless devotion, self-criticism, and self-irony are qualities natural to a man of intelligence, feeling, and honesty. The bastard child of a patrician father and a plebeian mother, Hyacinth is brought up by the quiet spinster, Miss Pynsent, who nourishes fond hopes of Hyacinth being reclaimed by the patrician class. In his early years Hyacinth is influenced by the revolutionary principles of the anarchist musician, Anastasius Vetch, the French communist book-binder, M. Poupin, and the practical revolutionary, Paul Muniment.

Hyacinth develops a sympathy for the downtrodden lower classes in society and pledges his life to the cause even if that might involve him in an act of violence. He meets the Princess Casamassima who is separated from her wealthy Italian husband, and is anxious and eager to be of assistance to the revolutionaries. The Princess is as capricious and self-willed as ever, and her beauty and charm are as fatal in their impact on Hyacinth as those of Christina had been on Roderick Hudson. Like Hyacinth, she combines in herself an artistic and aristocratic temperament, with a profound and restless sympathy for the oppressed. The Princess herself is an illegitimate child, like Hyacinth, and bears a grudge against a society powerful enough to force her into a repudiation of its power. In Hyacinth a refined awareness involves his self in a moral dilemma, whereas in the Princess a total want of the refining self-knowledge drives her into a capricious pursuit of her will. In Hyacinth, however, she recognizes

consistency and constancy, devotion and sensibility. Hyacinth 'never makes mistakes' and is incapable of breaking his given promise.

The Princess initiates him into the great world of wealth by introducing him to specimens of English country families. The dormant aristocratic temperament of Hyacinth is fully awakened and stimulated into an enthusiastic response to the patrician modes of living. Miss Pynsent dies, and Hyacinth uses her small legacy - augmented by Vetch's contribution to it - to travel in Europe, where he discovers values whose existence he had never recognized, and returns realizing that revolution cannot effect his personal salvation. What he has seen convinces him that certain objects, of which he had no former notion, should be preserved, and not destroyed; where he had only glimpsed a bound, he now discovers a horizon offering a new sense of life augmenting, enhancing and enriching his consciousness. The man of feeling and honesty is thus torn between loyalty to the cause and loyalty to his own nature. The dilemma is precipitated when he is required by the revolutionists to assassinate a certain duke. His binding sense of honour, which reminds one of Hamlet, makes it imperative on his part to be loyal to his pledge; but self-betrayal is as dishonorable as breaking a promise. The only alternative for Hyacinth for preserving his self-integrity is to commit suicide. Suicide thus becomes a moral victory for the self : it is a symbol of his disengagement from partial commitment, and of his affirmation of the total commitment of the single, genuine self to the whole complex, dynamic texture of experience.

Hyacinth realizes that revolutionary commitment is by nature isolative, because it views life not as a whole, but in parts setting each against the other in a mutually destructive clash of pride and hostility. Such a partial enlightenment as to the structure of experience must necessarily mean a deprivation of sensibility in terms of human refinement. Revolution oversimplifies the rich complexity of life in terms of ideological commitment and as such, must ever remain partial, and to that extent false. The individual, on whom no atom of life must be lost, finds the revolutionary ethos constrictive. For Hyacinth, who has seen both sides of the revolution, the truth of refinement lies not inside the movement, but outside it. The initial tragic error of Hyacinth lies in the free, but false choice he makes in total ignorance of the essential self-knowledge which could well have prevented it.

Hyacinth Robinson's dilemma reflects James's attitude to revolution and reform as obstacles to true human refinement. In every activity that tends to alter the structure of society, the nature of human experience as a total drama of historical response and growth and adaptation is forced into the background of the present need, or the specific interest. If truth is indivisible, and human refinement is an organic index of an individual sensibility totally committed to the truth of nature and experience, the revolutionary atmosphere is partial, privative and constrictive. Hyacinth as a revolutionary protagonist gains for his vision of life a broadened democratic awareness; but he also realizes that he is in danger of losing not only the intensity of culture, but also that sense of kinship with all which must include the friends as well as the enemies of his cause. As an insider to the revolution, in order to be true to his own nature, he must act in good grace, with malice towards none, and with charity to all; as an outsider, he must demonstrate a participating sympathy for those processes of common social life which authenticate the generous impulses of his individuality.

By resorting to suicide, Hyacinth keeps open the generic current of human nature, while preserving intact the integrity of his own single, genuine self. He is not escaping from evil, but from an isolative choice which renders life and the human condition evil. He moves symbolically toward a choice which repudiates any partial commitment to an idea, and affirms the complex and dynamic texture of experience. He gains in refinement by losing only his life-depriving loyalty to a particular cause. His refinement lies in his acquired capacity to deny whatever denies life, and accept whatever confirms life, although it must end in his being a martyr to the truth he has learned. Hyacinth does not commit suicide merely; he transcends himself and becomes a witness to the truth of life. In that transfiguration lies the proof of his refinement.

Henry James returns to the international theme in *The Reverberator,* which has greater affinities with *The American* than with *The Bostonians* and *The Princess Casamassima* which immediately preceded it. The central theme of the novel is the marriage of an innocent American girl to a member of the French high society.

The well-to-do Dosson and his two daughters, Fidelia and Francie, are the American innocents abroad in Paris. Flack, the

unscrupulously inquisitive American journalist, befriends them, and tries unsuccessfully to woo and wed the younger of the two girls - the pretty, but docile and innocent Francie. Through him, Francie meets Gaston Probert, a gentle and amiable product of the most Gallicised of American expatriate families. The Proberts are a family of Catholic Carolianians, who had migrated to Paris in the time of Louis Phillipe, and are more French than the Frenchmen in their exaggerated attachment to the French mode of life. Gaston falls in love with Francie, but his family consider her and her people too vulgar and too low for Gaston's position and status. They are, however, forced to give their consent reluctantly to the alliance by Gaston's determination to marry her. The jilted journlist lover, Flack, deceives Francie into divulging the secrets of the Probert family to him, and unscrupulously features every detail of their scandalous affairs in the gossip column of his American paper, *The Reverberator.* These shocking exposures infuriate the Proberts, and incite them to break up the proposed alliance. Gaston is placed in the dilemma of having to choose between his family and the dictates of his heart, and his choice is Francie, for whom he decides to renounce his family.

The theme of self-integrity links *The Reverberator* with the other novels of this period, i. e., with *The Bostonians, The Princess Casamassima* and *The Tragic Muse,* and also anticipates *The Ambassadors.* The quest for refinement brings the American pilgrims to Europe, and unless they are on their guard, they are sure to be corrupted by the superficial splendour of Europe. Refinement of manners, without an awareness of moral obligations, is no true refinement. The Europeanised Americans in *The Reverberator* have lost their moral spontaneity and their moral vitality because of their infatuation with the glittering superficialities of the European way of life. Gaston retains his moral consciousness as an American, and is therefore able to see through the banality of surfaces from which the Proberts' assumed mode of life suffers.

Gaston's revolt against the tradition-minded Probert family is in fact a repudiation of the evil, which the adopted culture of Europe has wrought in his native American culture. The conflict in Gaston is thus a clash between his own culture as an American, to which he yearns to remain true, and the step-culture of Europe, to which his family is so devoted as to force his own devotion to it. His independent existence as a moral being depends very much on the choice

he is going to make. The moral roots of his native culture are so deep-rooted in him that they ultimately separate him from the transplanted roots of his family in France. Waterloo, the painter friend of Gaston, rightly advises him to follow the bent of his moral inclinations in the interest of "simple self-preservation."[11] Attachment and loyalty to, and affection for the family are good, but the family feeling should not become an uncreative superstition blighting one's very moral existence. Waterloo tells Gaston, "They are doing their best to kill you morally - to render you incapable of individual life."[12] The refined individual, thus, knows the value of self-integrity, and is aware of the intrinsic worth of his own culture. In Gaston's determination to remain true to himself, and in his affirmation of what is good in his cultural inheritance, lies his refinement.

The opposite of refinement is vulgarity, and hence it is that Flack is the very antithesis of Gaston. Flack is the embodiment of vulgarity and immorality at their worst. His shameless passion for money, for scandal and publicity, his unabashed invasion of privacy, his betrayal of trust and his crass opportunism are odious and disgusting. In his utter lack of refinement, he is matched only by the hypocritical, pompous and pretentious Proberts, whose manners and effusions are "conventional forms and tortuous channels and grimacing masks for their impulses... forms resembling little the feelings themselves."[13] The measure of Jamesian refinement is thus to be found in the moral differential dramatised in the contrasting modes of sensibility embodied in Gaston's humane individualism on one side, and Flack's cynical egocentricity on the other. Gaston's refinement is a readiness to wait, to be impressed, absorbed and fertilized by the steady power and purpose of life.

The study of the strains, stresses, and tensions of the individual consciousness under a complex milieu continues to be the preoccupation of Henry James in *The Tragic Muse* also. With his characteristic intensity, James presents the dramatic conflict between the self and the universe, between the world of art and the world of public affairs. He presents refinement as consisting in the distinctive activity of preserving one's own self-integrity, and in recognizing and affirming the ennobling nature of art.

The two characters in whose lives the conflict of the self is enacted are Nick Dormer and Miriam Rooth. Nick sacrifices a brilliant

political career as a member of the Parliament to become a painter of portraits, and Miriam Rooth, the Tragic Muse, resolves to continue as an actress, rather than become the wife of a promising young diplomat. The 'political case' and the 'theatrical case,' as Henry James calls them, are artistically interwoven and presented on the same large canvas, without either of them obscuring a comprehensive view of the other.

The 'political case' is the story of Nick Dormer, on whom his mother, and his fiancee have placed high hopes of political achievement and political power. Lady Agnes wants her son to succeed, where her husband had failed for want of money, by achieving a matrimonial alliance with the wealthy Julia and thereby realize his political ambitions. The great 'executive woman' that she is, Julia's ambition is to become the wife of a great political personage and to play the role of a perfect political hostess. She loves her cousin Nick, and believes, like Lady Agnes, that Nick has all the makings of a ruler of nations. Both Lady Agnes and Julia have very little regard for art, and, in fact, do not hide their contempt for it. Mr Carteret, a retired parliamentarian, and an old friend of Sir Nicholas, is willing to make a big settlement on Nick if the youngman agrees to marry Julia, and concentrates on his political career. Lady Agnes, Julia, and Carteret have thus set their hearts upon a brilliant political career for Nick Dormer.

Nick, however, has his own ideal of happiness. He is a great lover of beauty and art, and happiness for him lies in the life of a portrait-painter. Artistic life, which is "full of ideas, full of refinement,"[14] stimulates him, refreshes him, and exalts him. He is shocked and disgusted by the attitude of his mother, and of Julia, towards art. The beautiful statues in the salon in Paris de l'Industrie are 'horror' to Lady Agnes. Julia does not care 'a rap about art,' because her 'mind is less graceful than her person'. Lady Agnes and Julia are not refined enough to feel, and respond to, the ecstatic delight of art. Nick's election to the House of Commons as a member from Harsh gladdens the hearts of Lady Agnes, Julia, and Carteret. In the flush of the victory, and in the general feeling of elation, Nick proposes to Julia and is happily accepted by her. But deep down in him, Nick has a strong feeling that he has acted against the requirements and promptings of his own nature. He calls himself a humbug, and feels ashamed of his insincere public utterances. He tries to explain the

conflict withinin him to his mother, "The difficulty is that I'm two men; it's the strangest thing that ever was... one man wins the seat - but it's the other who sits in it."[15]

In his love of portrait-painting, Nick is encouraged by his old friend, Gabriel Nash, to whom living is 'such an art,' and feeling is 'such a career'. Nash tells Nick that the superstructure of the individual's happiness is securely built on his own nature, on his disposition. Duty, or conduct, or honour lies in learning to play the individual's 'instrument' to perfection.[16] Nick has to decide between art and politics, between the self and the universe. His renunciation of politics would shatter the dreams of his family and of Julia, and Nick is sensitive enough to feel for the disappointment of his mother and of Julia. But by renouncing art he is imperilling his 'immortal soul', and striking at the very roots of his artistic being, his whole self.

Nick is averse to the world of political din and scramble; he is disgusted by party labels, party slogans, and party treachery; he hates "humbuggery, hypocrisy and cant."[17] The temple of art holds out for him peace, happiness, wisdom, and a measure of success. As an artist, his ideal is the preservation of his artistic integrity. It is not as if the ideal of public service is an ignoble one; Nick realises that he is a misfit in politics, as his soul seeks fulfilment in art. Relations between Nick and Julia are strained when Julia becomes aware of Nick's artistic inclinations and artistic aspirations; and there is a rupture when Julia enters Nick's studio one day to find him painting the portrait of Miriam Rooth in an atmosphere of intimate friendship. Jumping to the conclusion that Nick is infatuated with Miriam, Julia breaks off her engagement with him. This is followed by his resignation of his seat in the House of Commons, and both the happenings result in Nick forfeiting the fortune settled on him earlier by Carteret.

By giving up public life, Nick remains faithful to his artistic self. His decision to quit politics is regarded by his people both as an outrage and a betrayal of themselves. It is outrageous, because it is for art that Nick has sacrificed his political career; furthermore, he has betrayed his family and his fiancee. By his sacrifice, he has lost Julia's money, as also Carteret's fortune, and has also deprived his sisters, Grace and Biddy, of their chances of prosperous marriages. What they, however, fail to appreciate is that Nick has not betrayed himself. Nick is a characteristic Jamesian hero in preserving his

individual integrity inviolate. James seems to say that preserving the integrity of the artist in a hostile world is a difficult achievement, and that, in the noble task of serving art, no sacrifice is great or supreme. In material terms, Nick's sacrifice brings ruin upon himself and his family; but in spiritual terms, it enables him to work out his salvation as an artist.

Refinement consists in one recognizing and accepting the inestimable service of art to mankind. The artist is as much an arbiter and saviour of his race as the politician or the statesman. The 'obstinate finality' of art is the one human resource of man's immortality. The artist by being true to his art lends permanence to a society which is otherwise impermanent, tentative and unmeaningful. Art is what renders life meaningful. *The Tragic Muse* is thus a plea by Henry James for the revision of the status of the artist in society. Julia's final gesture of inviting Nick to paint her portrait is, doubtless, indicative of the change in her attitude towards art. She appears to have at last acquired the necessary refinement to appreciate the claims of art as an ennobling force.

The 'theatrical case' is the success-story of the Tragic Muse, Miriam Rooth. The good-looking but crude Miriam is an industrious and determined girl. Her ambition is to become a great actress, and to achieve this end she works hard with resolution and courage. Her great personal charm, her resolute self-confidence, and her perpetual good-humour are priceless assets to her in her profession. She is encouraged in her aspiration by Peter Sherringham, the brother of Julia and an important personage in the diplomatic service. Peter's passion for the theatre is not the outcome of a blind infatuation with it, but the result of a discerning and intelligent appreciation of its moral and spiritual influences. He is a believer in art, and is its "best judge, the best critic, the best observer,"[18] and is recognized by Miriam as her 'master'. His criticisms and suggestions help her progress as an actress from obscure beginnings to artistic greatness and fame. In Peter she finds her source of inspiration; in grand old Madame Carre she finds a great teacher; and in the great Mlle. Voisin, she finds an emulous example. When she first recites passages and poems in the drawing room of Madame Carre, she fails miserably to impress her auditors. The girl is not, however, disheartened by her failure. She applies herself to the task of improving herself with commendable diligence, courage and self-confidence. By grinding

hard work she improves her talents to such an extent that she soon becomes London's leading tragic actress.

Despite his sincre efforts to resist his growing fascination for Miriam, Peter finds himself deeply in love with his protegee. His ambition is to rise high in diplomatic service and end up one day as his country's ambassador. With all his love for the theatre, he does not, however, approve of the Bohemianism of the 'histrionic life.'[15] Passion, however, conquers, and he proposes to Julia who is now at the top of her acting fame. Miriam accuses him of betraying his artistic faith. It is Peter's faith in the theatre that has sustained and inspired Miriam to great artistic heights as an actress, and it is the same Peter who now wants her to give up acting and become his wife. Peter is unwilling to sacrifice his diplomatic career to become the 'husband of an actress'. While acknowledging her gratitude to him, Miriam makes it clear that she will not renounce art. By remaining firmly devoted to art, she preserves her artistic integrity.

Peter too will not turn traitor to his nature, and aspirations. His personal salvation lies in being true to his own disposition and ambition. Refinement lies in realising that the worlds of art and public affairs are separate and mutually exclusive. To make greater claims for one over the other is to reveal only a partial refinement of one's understanding and consciousness. Total refinement consists in one having a view of life in which art and politics occupy their distinct and rightful places as ideals, worthy of human aspiration.

The thematic premise in *The Tragic Muse*, namely total refinement, is elaborated through the subtle symbolic relationships (in the consciousness of the hero) by which are governed the morale traits of the man of sensibility. For Nick the private individual, the artistic world alone offers the richest possibility of attaining the fullest consciousness. For Nick, the public man of affairs, as others desire him to be, the pursuit of politics must be the means of social consummation. James subtly interposes the theme of marriage within the structure of these polarized forces in the hero's personality, and thereby makes the element of successful choice a symptom of his true refinement. Marriage is a very personal experience, and society demands that it be converted into a public gesture of plebian, common place aspiration for 'success', for 'political ambition'. Nick on the contrary, views marriage as a means of self-attainment whose truth

must lie in a patrician renunciation of the world outside and the intellectual and moral chaos it represents. He finally not only achieves an enhanced consciousness of life; but, by having learnt to preserve his true self in the climate of marriage, he also consummates it. Marriage to the regenerate refined self, is not a refracting medium, but a responsive means of 'self-radiation'. Nick's struggle to consummate an achieved condition of total, integral consciousness is organically contrasted with Miriam's struggle to merely preserve a balance of consciousness which she had already achieved, for her profession is a natural meeting ground of the private world of aesthetic sensibility and the public world of artistic responsibility. The two rhythms of self-consummation (the heroic, tragic) and self-preservation (the comic, human) are united in order to make the controlling and activized energy of conscious refinement a phenomenon of completed perfection.

THE CRISIS

After the ordeal comes the crisis of the self in which the self suffers distortion through its becoming too egotistical (Rose Armiger in *The Other House*), or too deludedly altruistic (Fleda in *The Spoils of Poynton*), or too presumptuously over-critical (The Narrator in *The Sacred Fount*), or too ineffectually influential (Nanda in *The Awkward Age*). In these novels, Henry James develops the tragic implications of the human personality deprived of the possibilities of true refinement, which deficiency brings about a destructive entropy of the whole self. James involves the human individuality in the naturalistic world of greed and lust, and dramatises the distracted shifts in the human personality from moral autonomy to spiritual perfidy, from selfhood to selfishness, from charity to tyranny, from participation to interference.[1] The distorted self enacts a climate of despotic egotism and moral corruption, obtruding and thwarting the processes and the possibilities of refinement, Negatively and ironically, James stresses the need for continuous self-knowledge as a means of that ultimate refinement of man's total sensibility which is at once fulfilment and redemption.

In *The Other House, The Spoils of Poynton, What Maisie Knew, The Awkward Age,* and *The Sacred Fount,* James considers the pitfalls of a selfhood without self-knowledge. In *The Other House*. a story about a rich banker by name Anthony Bream, James deals with the evils of a predatory egotism which is dangerously possessive. The handsome Tony Bream is sought to be possessed immorally by the lustful Rose Armiger. Tony has promised his dying wife that he would not marry again while their child, Effie, is alive. Rose Armiger is engaged to Peter Vidal, but is passionately in love with Tony. Mrs. Beever, a neighbour and a good friend of Tony, invites the young and innocent Jean Martle to live in her house, hoping that her son Paul Beever would one day marry Jean. The pretty Jean is also drawn towards the handsome banker Tony, and his child Effie. The craving of the egomaniac Rose for self-gratification leads her to crime when circumstances conspire to thwart her intentions. The very existence of Effie is the first obstacle in her way, and Jean's admired presence is a perpetual source of jealous irritation. The diabolic Rose murders the child and tries to foist the crime on innocent Jean. The murder is out, however, although she is permitted to withdraw unpunished.

In this novel, James dramatises the dangers of a morality which is based on egocentric selfhood. An unrefined self acts on the instruments of selfishness, and thereby upsets the principles of moral order and human justice. It is significant that no character in *The Other House* is judged and condemned. By reasons of their egotism, Mrs, Beever, Paul Beever and Tony Bream have forfeited their right to sit in judgment over Rose Armiger. The withdrawl of Rose is to their advantage, and hence they remain silent about her crime. Their silence is symptomatic of their spiritual sullenness amounting to a moral abetment in her crime. In the murder of moral justice, symbolized in the murder of the child, Rose has been egged on by the egotism of Mrs. Beever, Tony Bream and others.

The moral presumption of Mrs. Beever, which constitutes her egotism, initiates the dark tragedy of the benighted souls. She interferes in the affairs of the master of the Bounds, because she regards herself more or less as his guardian angel. She believes that she can save Tony from the evil of Rose Armiger, and this presumptuous egotism of Mrs. Beever involves everyone in trouble. She plans the marriage of her son Paul with Jean with presumptuous confidence, and involves them in an embarrassing situation. In her anxiety to keep Rose away from Tony, she consents to Rose coming and staying in her own house, and this results in Rose exercising her evil influence on her own son, Paul Beever. The final withdrawl of Rose is secretly welcomed by Mrs. Beever because it assures the security of her own son. Although, earlier, Paul talks of protecting Rose, he is also relieved at her going, and has a feeling that a danger has been averted. The departure of Rose leaves the field clear for Tony and Jean to marry, for they are already secretly in love with each other. Even Tony's behaviour is not above reproach. His egotism lies in his over-demonstrative civility towards his friends and guests. Rose is not wholly to blame if she mistakes Tony's egotistical civility for love, and is thus encouraged in her intentions on him.

Egocentricity constitutes a denial to others of the privilege of independent existence and personal choice. It leads to a gross and meddling interference with justice which to each individual must disclose itself as a free exercise of choice, love and charity. In *The Other House*, everyone seeks to exercise a centripetal control over the others who are symbolised as a collective 'persona' by the 'Other House', which is not the physical alternative merely; but the mythical

alter ego in reverse. The novel is thus a study of the distortion of the self by egotism of one kind or another. In a world afflicted by egotism, the idea of saving the people of 'the other house' is highly ironic and amusing, and is a mark of spiritual ineptitude. When the judge and the judged are alike in their egotism, the business of moral judgment becomes a wholly irrelevant and hollow preoccupation. James thus underscores the need for a refined self which alone, by virtue of its self-knowledge and self-awareness, can give relevance and meaning to the idea of moral justice. The sovereignty of selfhood must recognize the legitimacy of human independence which is justice in the moral sphere, and refinement in the spiritual. What justice is to the aggregate, refinement is to the individual - a force for redemptive self-knowledge.

Selflessness and altruism are necessary ingredients in human refinement, but they may easily exceed their limits in a rage of good conscience and thus result in an egotism of the worst kind, namely spiritual presumption and moral egotism. The Jamesian outstretched protagonists take pride in their moral superiority, and in the folly of seeming virtue set about to reform the world. In *The Spoils of Poynton* and *The Turn of the Screw* Henry James traces the destructive consequences of an over-refinement of the self leading to moral delusion and the ossification of self-knowledge. Fleda Vetch in *The Spoils of Poynton* and the governess in *The Turn of the Screw* are morally deluded creatures, lacking in essential self-knowledge, and are thus foredoomed to failure in their overweening roles as saviours. ,True human refinement consists in a controlled awareness of the moral middle-grounds which prevent man from being predatorily egocentric, or presumptuously altruistic.

In *The Spoils of Poynton,* James continues to dramatise the evils of a distorted self, and demonstrates the impossibility of moral justice operating as an effective principle of correct conduct in a world of greed and egotism. Mrs, Gereth and Mona endeavour to isolate beauty and make it exclusive by possessing it. In a world of warring egotisms, objects of beauty are regarded as 'spoils' by the selfishness of men. A thing of beauty is a joy for ever, and is more so, when it is a rarity; but human egotism and greed unite to separate art from its purpose, and beauty from its uniqueness. A battle is, as it were, waged for the possession of the Spoils of Poynton with Mrs. Gereth on one side, and her son and his fiancee on the other. The aesthetic

egotism of Mrs. Gereth will not allow the beauties of Poynton to fall into the hands of the barbarous Mona Bridgstock. Owen wants the spoils, firstly, because they are his by law, and, secondly, because Mona will not marry him if they are not restored to him by Mrs. Gereth. Mona's possessive egotism wants the beauties for the mere pride of possession. She must have things which are prized so much by others. She is greedy in so vulgar a sense that she would rather give up Owen than marry him without the beauties of Poynton. In fact, she appears to be more in love with the spoils than with Owen; in other words, she reduces him into a materialistic fetish identified with the spoils. She refuses to marry Owen until the spoils are restored to Poynton, and when this happens owing to a miscalculation on the part of Mrs. Gereth, Mona seizes the opportunity to get married to Owen promptly. Like a true barbarian, she believes that in order to enjoy a thing one should possess it. What she does not know is that spiritual delight of artistic creations can neither be purchased nor exclusively possessed like material objects. The barbarisation of the spoils results in their destruction. Once the craving to possess is satisfied, the object possessed loses all its fascination; and art which stands for permanence and eternity passes into the obsolescence of mere things which are subject to mutability and time. Eternity is mortgaged to time, the durable to the ephemeral. It is not therefore surprising that the spoils are destroyed by an accidental fire in the absence of the owners.

Mrs. Gereth's concern for the safety of the beauties of Poynton is good as an end, but her means to it are so self-centralized that her purpose produces evil, and, instead of saving the beauties, destroys them. It is her presumptuous aesthetic egotism which makes her deny the means of aesthetic delight to others on the ground that they are incapable of responding to aesthetic experience. By seeking to make aesthetic experience exclusive to connoisseurs, Mrs. Gereth is denying possibilities of refinement to people at large in society. Art, a window on the light and beauty of the world, no longer yields its clues of perception, or its glimpses of consciousness, once the human mind draws up its insensitive shutters of furtive jealousy, or rebellious pride. Art is self-sustaining, and needs no champions or saviours to espouse its cause. Refined aestheticism consists in an awareness of the autonomous and civilizing nature of art. Because of her presumptuous aesthetic egotism, Mrs. Gereth is as intensely greedy to posses beauty as Mona is by reason of her materialistic egotism. The

aesthetic Mrs. Gereth becomes ironically a philistine in her over-enthusiasm to save art.

In this dispute between a presumptuous aesthetician and an unfeeling barbarian over the spoils of Poynton, the mediator is a morally deluded girl, Fleda Vetch. Fleda's readiness to mediate between the mother and son is born out of a moral and spiritual presumption that she is well equipped to deal with the problem. Fleda sets for herself certain delusive standards of moral excellence devoid of a proper relation to real life, and endeavours to live up to them. This leads her to a false altruism which demands of her a foolish self-sacrifice and results in her being defeated and deserted.

In her over-keenness to be altruistic and just, Fleda neglects the reasonable claims of a just self, and thus becomes guilty of moral delusion. If in Mrs. Gereth and Mona selfishness leads to an aggressive assertion of the claims of the self, false altruism leads Fleda to a total neglect of the self, and the result is a distortion of the self in all of them. By erasing the image of the self. Fleda erases her own identity and individuality, and thereby undermines her own happiness. Lacking in self-knowledge, Fleda flees from her 'self' out of a mistaken notion of moral propriety. It is moral delusion arising from a presumptuous moral egotism which blinds Fleda to the reality of the 'self'.[1] It is ironical that while Fleda is appalled by the greed and selfishness of others, she herself is appalling because of her moral and spiritual egotism. True human refinement consists in the avoidance of the two extremes of unfeeling selfishness and self-centred altruism, and in acquiring, instead, an essential knowledge of the self which is neither endangered by an ignorance of the world, nor enslaved by the experience of its own selfhood.

In *What Maisie Knew,* Henry James further explores the dangers which a society without refinement offers its individuals. The exposure of the young and innocent to the contagion of moral corruption in society results in their being morally seduced and depraved. Little Maisie grows up in a social world, in which men and women have subordinated values to egotism, lust, and materialism. Such important relationships as those between husband and wife, and parents and children are perverted by the selfish whose sole aim is the gratification of their passions and desires. Men and women delight in irregular sexual relationships, and their unfortunate children

are foredoomed to an isolated and loveless existence. Little Maisie is acute and perceptive; she observes, 'knows', and, in the process, becomes corrupt herself.

The selfish and sensual Ida Farange quarrels with her greedy and lustful husband Beale, and is divorced when Maisie is six years old. Both sue for the custody of the child, and the court decrees that they shall have the child alternately for six-month periods. This arrangement suits admirably their purpose of 'cursed spite', and they indoctrinate the child with feelings of hatred for each other. For them she is just a little porcelain cup in which biting acids can be mixed, not one of their own flesh and blood, to whom they ought to be bound by a sense of natural affection and duty. The painted creature, Ida, marries Sir Claude, while Beale marries Maisie's attractive governess, Overmore. The sensual Ida soon tires of Claude and has a succession of lovers, and on grounds of illhealth she finally entrusts Maisie to Sir Claude. Beale soon baits a rich American lady, Mrs. Cuddon, a 'short, fat, wheedling person', and extends an insincere invitation to Maisie to accompany him and his latest consort to America. Maisie declines the invitation because she sees through her father's insincerity. Sir Claude too has a weakness for women. He and Mrs. Beale are lovers, and it is for the sake of Mrs. Beale that Claude finally gives up Maisie to whom he is much attached.

Mrs. Wix, the governess of Maisie, is equally selfish. Her devotion to Maisie is motivated by selfish reasons, and is a means of ensuring steady employment for her. She fears that Maisie would be wholly entrusted to Claude and Mrs. Beale and remarks to Maisie, "They'll take you, they'll take you, and what in the world will then become of me?"[1A] The poor governess, who has lost her own child, reveals a possessive maternal instinct which is at once fascinating and frightening to the innocent Maisie. Mrs. Wix "shares in the universal sin of selfhood. And with the rest of James's Londoners she inhabits a fallen world, where evil is normal and good perverse, where total good is a fiction, where the sensitive moral person cannot exist."[2] In other words, James dramatises in her the subtle evil of being too good.

As little Maisie advances from childhood to adolescence in a world of social grossness, personal depravity and moral ugliness, she comes to 'know' things. When she realises that she is being used as a messenger of abuse by her parents, she cleverly practises the

wisdom of silence, which is mistaken by them for a symptom of stupidity. As she grows up, Maisie understands the nature of the relationship between her parents. She comes to know of the several affairs of her mother, and is bold enough to tell the Captain, who is in love with her mother, not to be 'like others' in loving her mother for only a short while. On one occasion, as she walks on the beach with Sir Claude, she finds him absent-minded and presently understands that Sir Claude's attention is engaged in observing "the fine stride and shining limbs of a young fishwife who had just waded out of the sea with her basketful of shrimps."[3] This image dramatises the corruptive possibilities of a 'seeing' which is limited to the moronic range of superficial 'objectivity' - a seeing which does not evolve into an order of discriminating, self-edifying values. Values, on the contrary, have, in this world of mere seeing and mere seeming, degenerated into things and their attributes. Real 'insight' could transform things seen into a system of felt sensibility, which is missing here. The analogy is tangential; it is incapable of establishing a connection between various orders of experience. Hence it is that the metaphor, instead of clarifying, only obscures reality.

On another occasion, as Mrs. Wix discourses on the 'moral sense', the girl's mind wanders to the music of a guitar, and a couple singing of 'amour'. "Maisie knew what 'amour' meant too, and wondered if Mrs. Wix did."[4] Maisie's girlish passion for Sir Claude makes her a rival to Mrs. Beale. Knowing Sir Claude's weakness to be a sexual one, Maisie decides to offer her virginity to him in order to possess him - an act of furtive self-expression and rebellious intimacy seeking to assault the fortress of adult reality in order to grow into maturity. She is prepared to give up even Mrs. Wix, if Sir Claude gives up Mrs. Beale and comes to live with her. Henry James in his Preface refers to 'the death of her (Maisie's) childhood', which is dramatised in the novel. A corrupt world has successfully corrupted an innocent girl, although it has also released the pent-up currents of individual life in her. A stranger to the affections of her parents, a witness to acts of selfishness, and a spectator to shameless 'affairs' of men and women, Maisie grows up to 'know everything' about the wicked world, and herself falls a victim to its corruption and depravity. *What Maisie Knew* thus "deals with the violation of Maisie's innocence, with her corruption,"[5] but lodges one's imagination in the paradox of all vital life. In this world of evil and corruption, the necessary taste of experience rests on the enormous proposition that

the fruits of experience be rendered back to the forces of evil and corruption. Knowledge can be had in this kingdom of woe only through a violation of nature; the source of experience is sin even as the source of innocence is sloth. It is almost as if Maisie 'sees' by the loss of light, and 'knows' by the loss of vision.

In *What Maisie Knew*, Henry James subjects the idea of refinement to a double ordeal of the human consciousness. First, the power of the world to destroy the potentiality of refinement in a consciousness which is just opening out to the impressions of the outside universe is dramatised in the steady onslaught of society on the virgin innocence of Maisie. Secondly, the helplessness of unprotected innocence, and its lack of power to extend the latent possibilities of refinement in its own consciousness into the world of others, is dramatised in the gradual hardening of the moral sinew in an evolving personality as Maisie's. The unrefined world defies the refined individual; the individual who has suffered a deprivation of refinement extends the self-corrupting process into the world awaiting its refinement. The tragedy of Maisie is that the world as metaphor has usurped the reality of her consciousness, which in reaction becomes so paralysed that it seeks to enmesh the world into its own complex illusions, unbuttressed by any wholesome values except those that are anchored in a too, too limited selfhood. The cryptic response of the world to the individual's demand for refinement begs the question by conferring a favour that turns out to be a burden, and a gain that is in fact a loss.

In *The Awkward Age*, the momentum of the Jamesian sensibility launches the human consciousness into yet more tristful regions of human paradox and ambivalence. In a society lacking in refinement, selfhood degenerates into selfishness, morality into depravity; and values are sacrificed for individual whims and fancies. For the perceptive, sensitive and refined consciousness, the retention of the moral sense in an immoral world becomes an ordeal. James dramatises this ordeal of refinement in *The Awkward Age*.

In *The Awkward Age*, Henry James dramatises the maturing and refining of the self through a knowledge of good and evil. The ordeal of Nanda Brookenham lies in her struggle to retain her moral integrity in the face of the generic villainy of a corrupt and corrupting world. Nanda's refinement consists in her achieving a consciousness

of moral reality which enables her to see through the dazzle of the superficially refined social circle of the Buckingham Crescent. The social world of *The Awkward Age* forgoes the significant for the perfunctory, the human for the sophisticated, in the pursuit of success, influence and power. The people of this world are guided entirely by motives of lust and material prosperity. What makes them dangerous is the pose of urbanity, which is disarmingly destructive to the innocent and the inexperienced. In a greedy and depraved world, where men and women strive only for material ends, such noble sentiments and disciplines as love, loyalty, and friendship are dislodged by egotism, treachery, and hypocrisy. The concrete universals which ought to sustain true refinement are subverted by the casual abstractions of cultural expediency. This is the world which Nanda is made to encounter as she comes of age. and her ordeal is to keep her moral nature inviolate through an awareness of the spiritual distance between appearance and reality.

In this foul and stifling environment, James lets the consciousness of Nanda blossom out into its fragrant fulness. There are varieties of depravity and degrees of corruption in the social circle of Mrs. Brookenham, the mother of Nanda. The people of this circle delight in irregular, if exciting, sexual relationships. Cashmore has an affair, first, with Captain Dent-Douglas, and, later, with young Harold, the spoiled son of Mrs. Brookenham; Lord Petherton starts as a lover of Duchess and ends up as the paramour of the Duchess's niece, Aggie who is married to Mitchy ; Lord Petherton and Mitchy are homosexualists. Love has degenerated into lust, and consequently loyalty has lost its value and meaning. Not only are people lustful in this world, but they are also greedy and mercenary, exercising a parasitical control over the nurturing substance of culture. Lord Petherton sponges on Mitchy; Harold has no qualms in taking money from his mother's friend; Mrs. Brookenham and the Duchess vie with each other to get their daughters married to the wealthy Mitchy; Vanderbank is sorely tempted to marry Nanda for the endowment to be settled on her by Mr. Longdon.

The talk in the drawing-room of the Buckingham Crescent is gay, witty, and good-humoured. In 'the temple of analysis', Mrs. Brookenham is the presiding deity, and Mitchy and Vanderbank are her ardent votaries. They analyse and disentangle motives not for self-knowledge and self-betterment, but simply for the sheer cerebral

sensation of analysing them. Theirs is 'mere talk' because they do not mean what they say, and say what they do not mean. Conversation becomes for them an intellectual pastime achieving the vicarious sensation of social intercourse and pleasure, and more insidiously, of playing the 'President of Immortals' over others under their hypnotic power. Conversely, the penumbra of their self-hood becomes so neutralised by the social commitment as to render their consciousness a kind of no man's land where the power of the selfhood of others may easily enter.

An analysis, which does not have 'the excuse of a passion' for individual or social development, is 'mere talk' because thought is divorced from action and made to exist in a vacuum, with action proceeding not from objective thinking, but from selfish promptings. The episode, in which Mrs. Brookenham, Venderbank, and Mitchy analyse the situation of Nanda, is an example in case. Mrs. Brookenham wants Nanda to marry the ugly, but rich Mitchy, and not the poor but handsome Vanderbank, whom she wants for herself. She wants to find out what their intentions are towards Nanda. Mitchy confesses that as he lacks the magnetic charm of Vanderbank, Nanda would not marry him. This analysis of his own situation does not, however, prevent him from still hoping and endeavouring to win Nanda for himself. Vanderbank is made to understand that he has 'the sacred terror', and that he cannot 'help pleasing' others, and that such charming people 'keep everyone'. What he does not realise is that he could be more pleasing to one individual, whom he can keep with greater affection than others. Mrs. Brookenham learns of what Mitchy has in mind, but still schemes to bring him and Nanda together. Such talk in which insincerity and hypocrisy assume the mask of sincerity and frankness is a potent force of evil in society. The free and analytical talk of this circle is objectionable because it is abstracted from life. Vanderbank rightly remarks that they are all "cold and sarcastic and cynical without the soft human spot."[6] Their analytical chatter reveals them as creatures deprived of their essential humanity and moral sense.

Tha domestic world of Nanda is as foul and corrupting as the social world. Edward Brookenham, the father, is a weak and spineless fellow, and is very much under the thumb of his wife. The forty-one year old Mrs. Brookenham is still young and lovely. "She

had about her the pure light of youth - would always have it; her head, her figure, her flexibility, her flickering colour, her lovely, silly eyes, her natural quavering tone, all played together towards this effect by some trick that had never been exposed."[7] A domineering wife and an irresponsible mother, Mrs. Brookenham loves only herself and her drawing-room talks with her circle of friends. Her selfish and silly behaviour is the characteristic fruit of a selfish and silly society. Her intelligence and shrewdness enable her to exploit men and situations to her own maximum advantage. She wants Vanderbank for herself and hence does not like the idea of Nanda marrying him. Van is tempted to marry Nanda when Mr. Longdon promises to settle an endowment on Nanda if Van should marry her. Mrs. Brookenham cleverly exploits the vanity of Van to dissuade him from agreeing to Longdon's proposal. In the presence of Van she tells Mitchy that Van "won't want to have the pecuniary question mixed up with the matter: to look in short as if he had to be paid. He's like you, you know - he's proud."[8] It is no wonder that, after this episode, the proud Van decides not to marry Nanda for Longdon's money. As if this measure is not enough to alienate Van from Nanda, Mrs. Brookenham openly humiliates Nanda at the dinner-party in Tischy Grendon's place. In taking this step she is motivated by a double purpose. She wants Van to know that Nanda has lost her innocence. She draws the attention of the guests to the fact that Nanda has been reading 'filthy' French novels. She wants Longdon to realise that Nanda is being corrupted by her relations and friends, in order that he might take Nanda out of the corrupting circle. The resourceful Mrs. Brookenham thus succeeds in keeping Van for herself and arranging for the maintenance and protection of Nanda by Longdon. In the gratification of her egotism, she even sacrifices the hapiness of her own daughter.

The Duchess is the foil to Mrs. Brookenham. She has a niece, Aggie, who has also come of age. But, unlike Mrs. Brook, the Duchess has not given complete freedom to the girl to acquire a knowledge of the world. She has 'protected' Aggie until her marriage with Mitchy, but Aggie is swept off her feet and corrupred by the wicked world in no time. Aggie betrays her husband by becoming the mistress of Lord Petherton, who is her aunt's lover also. The Duchess also schemes to get Aggie married to the rich Mitchy, for, like Mrs. Brookenham, she believes that material well-being is more important than happiness.

Mitchy, although corrupt, is not an evil-natured fellow. His curse is, as he himself remarks, his 'moral beauty' which prevents him from exploiting the helpless situation of Nanda, whom he loves, He marries Aggie to grant the dear wish of Nanda, and, even after Aggie's betrayal of himself, he does not blame Nanda for his unhappiness. He strives sincerely to make Nanda happy, and is prepared to help her financially in collaboration with Longdon. Longdon detects the integrity and goodness of Mitchy, and through him acquires a proper understanding of Nanda. Longdon had once been a great admirer of Nanda's grand-mother, and is now a loyal well-wisher of Nanda. In a world of betrayals and hypocrisies, the loyalty of Longdon and Mitchy towards Nanda stands out in all its incandescent glory. Nanda's own resources of character, augmented by the salutary influence of Longdon and Mitchy, help her steer clear of the whirlpools of evil and corruption in her social world.

Vanderbank, despite his charm and intelligence, is too weak and dependent on the social world to renounce it. He knows the inadequacy of the social world in which he lives, but is impotent to do anything about it. In fact, he would cease to be what he is in a social world different from what it is. He will not marry Nanda because of what she knows. He has the 'hereditary prejudice' which prevents a man from marrying a girl who has lost her innocence. While Longdon and Mitchy realise that Nanda's corruption is a superficial one, Van believes her to be wholly corrupt. Nanda behaves with dignity and magnanimity towards Van. She requests him to take great care of her mother, and makes him understand that she does not blame him for his unsympathetic attitude towards her. The tragedy of Nanda, as it has rightly been pointed out by Dorothea Krook, lies in her helpless awareness of 'the corruption in her blood'. She too shares in Van's 'hereditary prejudice', which a corrupt society has injected into her blood, and for this reason cannot marry Mitchy who does not have this prejudice. Knowing her corruption she is yet "helpless by her intelligence, her 'knowledge', to exorcise this last corruption in her blood, and helpless therefore to save herself."[9] The tragedy of human existence lies in 'the ultimate helplessness of the human intelligence' to save men from suffering and destruction. Viewed from this angle, *The Awkward Age* anticipates *The Wings of the Dove*. Van's pride and prejudice blind him to the moral purity and integrity of Nanda, and force her to withdraw from the corrupt world to live with Longdon in his country-house. A corresponding moral

awareness in Van could have ensured his happy union with Nanda, but, as things stand, Nanda would have to spend her days in renunciation of a wicked world. It is in *The Golden Bowl* that Henry James transforms the moral turpitude of the Prince to moral responsibility, and brings about the happy reunion of the Prince and Maggie Verver.

In rejecting Nanda, Van rejects tested goodness. His failure to recognize the importance and value of the moral consciousness in human affairs results from an aggressive intellectuality which hardens the heart and dries up the 'sacred fount'. What makes for refinement is the harmonious blending of the best qualities of the head and the heart. With the head one might acquire knowledge, and possibly partial self-knowledge, but what transforms knowledge into total self-knowledge is the catalyst of "recognition", for which one has to turn to one's own heart. With the petrification of the heart the moral sense is paralysed, and the consequence is the blighting of human happiness by the destructive forces of evil. The absence of a moral sense in Maisie and Aggie results in their corruption by the evil world. The perceptive, intelligent, and moral Nanda acquires a knowledge of the world and of herself, and through a consciousness of reality understands the nature and extent of her relationship with, and her involvement in the world. Her final withdrawal from the Buckingham Crescent is a self-redeeming gesture of renunciation in an incorrigible world. The novel dramatises the recoil of the refined self away from a world, which has rendered itself incapable of a direct experience of life, and has been reduced to a state of idiotic parasitism deriving its only perceptions of meaning through a vicarious satisfaction of its lusts and greeds, its pulses and needs. The self in reaction against such an imbecile world finds a haven in a consciousness made porous to, but not contaminated by the experience of an 'awkward' age.

In *The Sacred Fount*, Henry James dramatises the self-destructive nature of intellectual pride. The head and the heart should have an equal share in the refinement of the individual consciousness. An over-emphasis on either of them results in a lop-sided growth of the consciousness, and consequently in a partial apprehension of reality and truth. In *The Awkward Age*, James hints at the dangers of a social conversation which is over-intellectualized to the point of abstraction from life. In *The Sacred Fount*, James fully explores the evil of an over-ratiocinative mind which renders the individual morally incapable of living up to his full humanity in the human situation, of which he is a specially committed spectator.

The over-active mind of the narrator probes the world not with the intention of lifting the veil of reality to establish a connection between the self and the non-self, but for the excitement and gratification of an overweening intellectual pride. The narrator has rightly been described as an intellectual Peeping Tom, who minds other people's business in order to indulge his own egotism. He believes that "for real excitement there are no such adventures as intellectual ones."[10] With Obert, the narrator talks of "the joy of the intellectual mastery of things unamenable, that joy of determining, almost of creating results."[11] In his egotism, he arrogates to himself the role of the Divine Intelligence, whose prerogative it legitimately is to establish a comprehensive mastery over 'unamenable' things.

The narrator's mind, obsessed with the ambition of an 'intellectual mastery' over life, sacrifices feeling as an interference, and hardens the heart to save his "priceless pearl of an enquiry."[12] "The only personal privilege," which he wants to enjoy, "from the whole business was that of understanding"[13] Ironically enough, what the narrator does not 'know' is that 'understanding' is not all. An objective understanding of the 'loss', the 'disintegration', and the 'doom' of the unfortunate, is not beneficial so long as 'understanding' is not aligned with moral responsibility. In other words, mere 'consciousness' without a 'conscience' lands him in an arid desert of barrenness and futility. It is not, therefore, surprising that the narrator could save neither himself, nor others. He says, "I could not save Mrs. Server, and I couldn't save poor Briss."[14] But he is nonetheless proud of the fact that he could guard his 'precious sense of their loss, their disintegration and their doom...' Henry James draws our attention to the truth that a consciousness lacking in true moral awareness is the biggest obstacle to human refinement.

The narrator has observed that Grace Brissenden, a forty year old plain woman, has become pretty and youthful after her marriage with Guy Brissenden. He believes that age grows younger at the expense of youth. Guy Brissenden, who looks old and unhappy, confirms the narrator's hypothesis. "He looked almost anything - he looked quite sixty."[15] The narrator also observes that Gilbert Long, a boorish and stupid fellow, has changed into an amiable and witty man. With the assistance of Grace Brissenden, who becomes his willing pupil, the narrator hunts for the woman from whom Long is drawing his wit, Grace suggests Lady John as the woman, but the

narrator does not agree with her. Lady John's wit is undepleted, and so she cannot be the 'victim'. Grace then pitches on May Server, an attractive and charming woman, who has of late been very lackadaisical and unhappy. The narrator instinctively feels sympathy, and pity for May Server, and inspite of the artist Obert's confirmation that May Server is a changed woman the narrator maintains that she is not the woman. But it presently becomes evident to him that she was the woman in question. According to him, Grace and Long are the 'sacrificers' and Guy and May are the 'sacrificed'. The 'palace of thought', which the narrator builds with intellectual pride, topples like a house of cards when, in the end, his own pupil Grace Brissenden repudiates his hypothesis and calls him 'crazy'. Obert tells him that May Server has 'changed back', and Grace asserts that the transformation of Long is all a myth. Lady John and Gilbert Long are lovers, and May Server is a 'horrid' flirt. The ironies of self-metamorphosis dramatise the limits of human understanding.

From the evidence of the story, it is clear that the hypothesising narrator puts ideas into the minds of the other characters, Falstaff-like, constituting himself a source of wit in others, and thereby denuding his own wit of the capacity to see through the disparities between illusion and reality. If they agree with him about the things he has seen, it does not necessarily mean that they have independently seen the same themselves. When Grace Brissenden tells him that May Server was the 'victim', the narrator congratulates her on her commendable reasoning powers, and she replies that she was able to see because of his influence over her. She says, "You've made me sublime. You found me dense". Again, towards the end, when she repudiates his theory, she tells him "you talk too much, I mean you're carried away - you're abused by a fine fancy; so that with your art of putting things, one doesn't know where one is..."[16] Obert also disclaims any responsibility for having seemed to agree with the narrator. He says, "I assure you I decline all responsibility. I see the responsibility as quite beautifully yours."[17] If he had said that May Server was a changed woman, it was because the narrator himself had first hinted at it. Obert says, "I do see. But only... through you having seen first. You gave me the pieces. I've put them together."[18]

It is the narrator's art of putting things together that bewitched Obert and Grace into a state of drawing the narrator's conclusions for him. While the obsessed mind of the narrator reads into situations

significances which tickle his intellectual pride, it prevents him from drawing the real conclusions which constitute the truth. Illusion, acted upon by a ratiocinative will, assumes the texture of fiction and illumines truth for a while; but as truth organises itself into a structure of reality, the power of illusion is lost, and the illusionist is disillusioned and his pet dream shattered by the fierce sun of truth. Guy Brissenden is unhappy, not because he is consciously aware of his being the 'sacrificed', but because his wife, whom he loves very much, is neglecting him. May Server is unhappy and terrified because life has not been kind to her - she has lost her three children, and possibly her husband also - and she is in search of affection and sympathy.

What the narrator fails to understand is that May Server is in love with him. Mrs. Brissenden, at one stage, asks Obert if the narrator was falling in love with May Server. The narrator asks himself, "Had I myself suddenly fallen so much in love with Mrs. Server that the care of her reputation had become with me an obsession? It was of no use saying that I simply pitied her."[19] Obert feels that the disappointed May Server seeks the company of Guy Brissenden, who is also unhappy because of the indifference of his wife. The narrator's instinctive feeling for May Server is one of pity, but as a consequence of the hardening of the heart by the head he remains unmoved by the dictates of his heart. He is so enamoured of his hypothesis - that May Server is the fount of Long's wit - that he is totally blind to a very natural explanation of May's strange behaviour, i. e., that she might be in love with himself.[20] May's fear and hesitation are natural because of the narrator's attitude, which is at once detached and sympathetic towards her. In his over-worship of the head, the narrator dries up the 'sacred fount' of the heart, and thus acquires a knowledge which is divorced from the moral fount, the heart, from which the stream of all life emerges. Like the governess in *The Turn of the Screw*, the narrator delights in detecting evil in others, while being unaware of the evil in himself. The narrator anticipates Lambert Strether, whose consciousness, however, improves through experience, unlike the narrator's which deteriorates because of the hardening of his heart.

The image of the mysterious figure in the novel has drawn a good deal of critical attention. Evidently, Henry James is seeking to dramatise in the figure the differing modes of sensibility among the characters in the light of an objective test. Most important of all

these sensibilities under test - and of consciounesses under ordeal - is that of the narrator himself, for there is no other 'objective' test within the terms of the story to achieve this purpose. The narrator is being tested by a work of art - which on the surface is an objectification of his sensibility. The work is also a measure of his inner strength and stress, of which he is not aware. He sees only a mask of death in the figure, and misses the truth of life behind it. He finds beauty, but no intimation of the 'love' which beauty is capable of stirring, for he has made the mistake of defining reality entirely in terms of his own truth, which, under the test of the concrete and objective presence of the figure, must be judged as illusion, for abstractions have only the power of definition, but not that of comprehension. The narrator forces life into a corner of his own limited truth, and for doing this he is himself driven into a corner and humbled by life, which will not conform to the patterns and forces of alignment projected by his obsessed consciousness. The Sacred Fount, at its source, contains, in indistinguishable and inseparable identity and unity, all the processes of truth, of life and death. Bent on seeing only death, the narrator misses life which is to be found within the same source. This refusal to see life as a whole constitutes the narrator's creative pride with all its saga of tragic crisis and disaster.

THE FULFILMENT

In the novels of the middle period, Henry James had explored the limits of refinement in relation to the human personality as it reacted to the objective world, exercising upon it a subjective pressure, and yet recovering for itself through refinement a sense of objective existence from the world of impersonal facts and forces. The characters of these novels seem to expend all their moral energy in extricating their personality from the demands of a complex reality polarized between the objective and the subjective modes of selfhood. What refinement they show, or are capable of, is neutralized by this struggle for awareness beyond which their selfhood cannot enact the significance of human 'being'. In other words, the process of refinement does not rise to the level of moral heroism. But in the novels of the major phase, Henry James dramatises a persistent moral heroism leading to the refinements of moral action consisting of renunciation, social and ethical responsibility and, above all, the experience of personal growth in the major characters. Henry James arrives at his artistic best, as it were, when in these novels he analyses moral truth in its several perspectives offered by the dynamics of refinement, as it affects, alters and transforms the lives and the visions of his major intelligences.

In *The Ambassadors,* Henry James explores and dramatises the idea of refinement in terms of an evolving and mellowing consciousness. Like Isabel and Newman, Lambert Strether is an American innocent abroad in Europe, and is also a 'vessel' of consciousness on whom 'nothing is lost'. He is Mrs. Newsome's ambassador from Woollett to Paris, and the mission on which he is sent is to rescue young Chad Newsome from the clutches of a 'hideous' Parisian enchantress, Mme. de Vionnet. Success in his mission would open up 'an opulent future' for Strether with Mrs. Newsome as his wife.

The highly perceptive and imaginative Strether sets foot on the English soil conscious of "the oddity of a double consciousness. There was detachment in his zeal and curiosity in his indifference."[1] Unlike Chad and Jim, Strether does not regard Europe as a 'gilded holiday toy' to play with and discard at will. He does not share Woollett's prejudices regarding life in Paris. His is not, however, a blind admiration of European life and culture. He keeps an open mind, and is on his guard. From the moment he alights in England, he has a feeling of refreshing ease and harmony. A new chapter is,

as it were, opened up in his life, and the past appears to recede from him into the limbo of the forgotten. "Nothing could have been more odd than Strether's feeling at that moment, that he was launched in something of which the sense would be quite disconnected from the sense of his past. and which was literally biginning there and then."[2] He finds himself in tune with the life in Europe, and feels that he is young once again. "He had never expected - that was the truth of it - again to find himself young, and all the years and other things it had taken to make him so were exactly his present arithmetic."[3] Strether's consciousness opens out in all its sensitive fulness responding to the myriad impressions of life in Europe and reflecting on the significance of these impressions. For the first time in his life, the middle-aged Strether tastes the thrill of involvement in experience. Neither favoured by fortune, nor supported by success, poor Strether, who had lost both his wife and his only child, reflects in anguish and sorrow on his misfortunes and failures. To the people of Woollett he is known only as the editor of a magazine, *Review*, subsidized by Mrs. Newsome. What pains him deeply is not so much the memory of a tragic and unsuccessful past as the loss of life, which has left him a pathetic waif on the banks and shoals of time.

Strether has become a convert to the creed of life, and he believes that the cup of life must be drained to its very dregs in order that perception might grow into a vision of life. Once he is in Europe, he is rejuvenated at the very thought of the limitless possibilities there for a fully 'lived' life. In the episode of Gloriani's garden-party, Strether advises little Bilham to live all he can,[4] without himself fully comprehending the inestimable value of experience by reason of his own unfamiliarity with it. He believes in the benefits of experience and therefore welcomes it without any fear. In Woollett he had been denied of opportunities for experience, and thereby of an expansion and enrichment of his consciousness. The reluctant adolescent that he had been in his American milieu, he now prepares himself unreservedly to play the role of a willing adult in the European ethos.

The Woollett morality equates enjoyment with evil, and hence forbids experience as a contimination of life. It is Strether's faith that Bilham should not indulge in moral anarchy but that he should achieve moral growth through experience. Experience is not a gross thing to be shunned in the scope of action, or some uncurrent wealth of life to be accumulated like an unused miser's hoard, but rather to be

cultivated without a cease of its majesty as a means of moral refinement. This intimation of refinement through experience takes a firm hold on Strether's consciousness as he sits in the garden of Gloriani. In Gloriani's garden, symbolizing the Garden of Innocence, Strether is the innocent prelapsarian Adam, but paradoxically aware of the truth that moral knowledge is impossible without a knowledge of evil.

Henry James exposes the limitations of the Woollett morality, which in its practice of "cloistered virtue" suspects and fears experience as being dangerous and destructive. Strether does not intend to run away from the experiences which life in Paris offers him, but is determined to live them fully. In Woollett, life is oppressive because life is sought to be made to order by the rigid moral system of the place. In Europe, life is a delight because people take life as it comes to them, without being unduly tyrannised over by any rigid moral laws.

Mrs. Newsome, Sarah and Jim are greatly concerned about Chad because they regard Paris as the "consecrated scene of rash infatuation", and as a hot-bed of evil and corruption. In the kaleidoscope of human life, they can distinguish only black and white. They are utterly incapable of understanding that there could be shades of black in white, and of white in black ramifying themselves through the inevitable intermediate ranges of light and shade. It is precisely this awareness of ugliness in beauty and beauty in ugliness that eventually refines the consciousness of Strether and makes him capable of infinite love, sympathy and charity.

Strether repudiates the Woollett morality because, in the expansion of his consciousness, he has come to realise that it creates a fear of experience, and thus provokes him into a "sacred range", and secondly because it equates happiness with material well-being. The wealth which the Newsomes have amassed is tainted, and their "big, brave, bouncing business" is the bribe with which they want to buy Strether's soul. From a Faustian personality, which he is given to act out, Strether grows into a Christian personality; for, in the measure that he achieves refinement, he affirms the virtue of charity, and the valour of humility. The lives of the Newsomes are, as it were, made to order and stream-lined; they cannot enjoy life as it is in the process of enacting itself and enchafing the human sensibility, because their eyes are always on the clock. Time is precious to them

in so far as it has a cash value. It is highly ironical, and very characteristic of their ignorance, that they, who do not know the real character of time as value in terms of an achieved awareness of life which it can bestow, live by manufacturing clocks. In the philistine set of values dominated by the possessive and mercenary motives, there has come about a withering perversion of the true ideals. Time, which had been socially prefigured as a measure of life, has now become a Goliath of routine. Life is no longer the measure of time; time is the measure, in a curiously perverted manner, of life. The mysterious article manufactured at Woollett, as R. W. Stallman asserts, is the time-piece.[4] Woollett keeps its eye on the clock for the purpose of greedy acquisition, while the fleeting hour flits by ungrasped, unenjoyed and unfathomed. Time assumes a destructive aspect when the priceless intimations of life, which it brings along with its lissom flow are lost on the insensitive, the imperceptive, and the unrefined. Strether sees the creative aspect of time by virtue of his refined consciousness which enables him to fully comprehend the insights into life offered by time; time thus becomes for him the burnished mirror on which eternity casts its fluent, fruitful images.

To begin with, even Strether carries with him some of the Woollett traits to Europe. Like the people of Woollett, Strether is at first incapable of surrendering himself to the enjoyment of the present moment. During his first walk with Maria Gostrey, she finds him constantly consulting his watch and remarks:

> 'You're not enjoying it, I think, so much as you ought.
>
> 'I see' - he appeared thoughtfully to agree. 'Great is my privilege.'
>
> 'Oh, it's not your privilege. It has nothing to do with me... Your failure's general.'
>
> 'Ah, there you are.' he laughed. 'It's the failure of Woollett. That's general.'
>
> 'The failure to enjoy,' Miss Gostrey explained, 'is what I mean.'[5]

Strether's mind is elsewhere; he is thinking about Waymarsh whom he has to meet on his arrival in England, and hence he is unable to enjoy his walk and talk with Gostrey. He further tells her, "I'm always considering something else; something else, I mean, than the thing of the moment. The obsession of the other thing is the terror."[6] His obsession of things which do not belong to the present, or of things

which jettison his mind out of the present, is a terror for the reason that he is so intensely aware of his fear of missing the priceless lessons of the present. The terror of the apparition of an "other", which is not the present, makes mad the guilty, and appalls the free; Strether who has travelled from guilt to freedom must preserve his redeeming self-awareness from being paralysed by the past which is a burden, or by the future which is a care. Self analysis - a characteristic of all the late Jamesian protagonists - leads to self-knowledge, thereby enabling Strether to get over his Woollett habit of "considering something else" at the cost of the present moment.

For Mrs. Newsome, the "executive woman," time is measurable in terms of the results achieved in the projects undertaken by her. Human beings, like clocks, are made to order, and ordered to tick with the mechanical power supplied by her. She has blue-printed the lives of Strether and Chad with the expert eye of a perfect timer. Strether is not so much sent, as ordered to bring Chad back in time to be initiated into the world of business. Any delay on the part of Strether would mean so much of time lost in terms of the business prospects ruined for Chad Newsome. Strether tells Gostrey, "He (Chad) can come into business now - he can't come later."[7] In fact, Strether's futute is linked up with his successful accomplishment of the task within the specified time. The hand (Mrs. Newsome) that wound up the clock supervises and directs the ticking (Strether's plan of action) from Woollett through a dismally punctual correspondence. But once the clock (Strether) touches Europe, it acquires a different idea of its inner working, and therefore a different sense of time. The old clock of Woollett (middle aged Strether) is thus born anew in Europe and feels young once again. It now ticks to a different rhythm of time, and thus severs its connections completely with its previous maker. This rebirth of the clock results in an assertion of its freedom from Woollett. Mrs. Newsome concludes that Strether is no good and promptly stops her correspondence, and sends Sarah, Jim and Mamie to Paris for the purpose of enticing Chad into the business world. To Mrs. Newsome, time is business, time is money, but to Strether time has a different identity and significance; to him it is the business of life, it is the wealth of perception. His consciousness, which vibrates and responds to every whirr of time, regards time as a source of perception, of knowledge and growth. By understanding time and merging his consciousness in it, Strether transcends it, transcends New England, and transcends even Paris.

In the river of time, the boat containing the lovers, Chad and Mme. Vionnet, is the tide of experience buoyed up in order to illumine the still, steady depths of life and refine the consciousness of Strether. What he has all along considered to be a "virtuous attachment" is now revealed to be an immoral and ugly one. The beauty which he had discovered and appreciated is now revealed to be only a mask hiding beneath it evil and ugliness. This discovery does not come to him as a shock, but as an intimation of what life really is. It is, therefore, not surprising that he pardons the lovers with feelings of sympathy, charity and love. He realizes that although all should do what they must, in actuality all do what they can. He is himself no exception to this, but the experience of Europe gives this chastened American a chance of viewing his own consciousness from outside for a moment of eternity; and that single bath of his nature in the vitalities of life transform and transfigure his selfhood. The 'ambassador' succeeds in his failure to accomplish his 'embassy'.

The education of Strether is complete only when he "sees" the evil and ugliness of Europe, as surely as he had seen its good and beauty, and grasps their inseparable unity in the total drama of life. Life in Paris pulses with art and beauty, and Strether is impressed by the aestheticism and manners of Paris. Chad has improved remarkably, because of the beneficial influence of a charming woman. Strether greatly admires Mme. Vionnet for her distinction, charm and amiability. Deserted by her husband, "a polished, impertinent reprobate", Mme. Vionnet and her lovely and innocent daughter Jeanne, have befriended Chad and made him what he is. Strether is informed by Bilham that the attachment between Chad and Mme. de Vionnet is a "virtuous" one. He believes for some time that Chad would one day marry the pretty Jeanne. He does not, therefore, want to break an association which has done so much good to Chad. Both Gostrey and Bilham know the true nature of the relationship between Chad and Mme. Vionnet, but they deliberately lie in order that Strether might discover the truth for himself. Strether himself agrees that little Bilham had lied like a gentleman; if he and Gostrey had not lied, Strether would have promptly reverted to his Woollett prejudices to the detriment of his moral growth. Strether soon surpasses his teachers in the education of the self. Unlike them, he overgrows the necessity of a protective mask of selfhood and mendacity in order to assuage the blinding flashes of truth. He, above all the rest, can suffer truth truly. In him Patience and Passion come together; in him

the minister and the scourge have blended themselves into a single human essence; the cause of the maturing of his selfhood is his refinement of consciousness. Sent to be the manipulator of human beings as puppets, Strether becomes *their* puppet until at last his own refinement is achieved. But once it is achieved, the role and the actor fuse into one in him, while in others they are kept apart, distinct, and mutually unfructifying. Strether outgrows the commonplaces of self-dramatisation, and histrionic messianism, while the others do not, because they live in a world sharply divided between the puppets and the string-pullers.

Gostrey has taught Strether never to make up his mind about anything hastily, but to wait, see, and then judge. Strether profits by this lesson, as it enables him to view the American and European modes of life objectively, and arrive at a comparative appraisal of their strengths and weaknesses. Life in Woollett is bad, but even the life of Paris is not all good. Behind the dazzle and glitter of the art, beauty and manners of Europe is the sordidness of immorality and the ugliness of insensitivity. Europe's lack of moral seriousness has made her charm and distinction merely a superficial one. For Western civilization what is wanting in terms of refinement is the integration of art and morals. Henry James deplores the disintegration of Western civilization by the divorcing of art from morals, and vice versa. Morality, without the liberating and humanizing influence of art, tends to become rigid, prohibitive and uncreative; art, without a sound basis in morality, tends to become a fetishistic source of evil and corruption.

The international contrast is thus presented by Henry James in terms of the growth of Strether's awareness of the American and European modes of life. From the total nature and quality of Strether's experience emerges his understanding of human life and reality. Born as men are to sin, no man is completely exempt from the generic stains of the human race. Human weakness does not provoke Strether's contempt, but gains his sympathy and understanding. He attains that state of compassionate understanding which enables one to view life objectively and dispassionately, without depriving oneself either of the heights, or the depths of life. The sordid affair of Mme. Vionnet with Chad does not lead Strether to treat them with contempt. He is able to understand and sympathise with her "abysmall, pitiful" passion for Chad, and hence it is that he advises Chad not to desert her brutishly, but to be loyal and grateful to her.

Strether is able to identify himself with Parisian life and realise that the evil of Mme. Vionnet is endemic, and as such, pardonable more as a matter for understanding than for judgment.

Chad deserts Mme. de Vionnet without any compunction because he has not achieved moral growth in Europe. He is the ugly American, facetious, romantic and volatile, in contrast to Strether, who is the refined American, responsive, responsible and percipient. Chad's refinement is only superficial, and, despite all his denials to the contrary, he is really tired of Mme. Vionnet "as he might... of roast mutton for dinner."[8] He, therefore, returns to Woollett to take up the advertising end of his family business, and to turn his attention to "another woman". He, along with Waymarsh and Jim, comprises the band of "passionless pilgrims" to whom life in Europe is full only of sensual thrill and enjoyment.

Despite Mme. Vionnet's sin of adultery, she is pardonable in as much as she is tragically aware of her own helpless weakness. She tells Strether that she hates herself for being what she is, but then she cannot help being herself. Strether knows that the tragedy of human existence lies in man's helplessness, despite all his knowledge, in the face of the irremediable evil within himself. By condoning Mme. Vionnet, Strether condones the entire human race. To fully grasp the infinite possibilities and unsurmised surprises of life, one should fully "live" it with a sensitive and responsive consciousness. Once Strether achieves a refined awareness of the dynamism of life, the future ceases to hold any terror for him. In her last talk with him, Gostrey asks Strether as to why he desires to go back to his country, and he answers, "I do not know. There will always be something"[9] His marriage with Mrs. Newsome being out of question, his future is uncertain, but Strether is not at all worried about it. Since he has cultivated "the unattainable art of taking things as they came,"[10] he can take life as it came to him, and make the best of it. Strether's refinement makes him an artist of the way of life.

Strether's ambassadorial assignment gives him an opportunity to form and exercise his great love of truth, which constitutes the "refinement of his supreme scruple". For him, truth is its own reward, and as such he does not unduly worry himself about his own future. In fact, his discovery of truth results in his sacrificing "an opulent future" with Mrs. Newsome as his wife. There are other rewards, too,

coming his way, which he refuses to accept. Gostrey hints that she is willing to marry him, but Strether is resolved not to get "anything out of the whole affair". Mme. de Vionnet unknowingly hits on the truth when she remarks that for one to be happy one has to take "so much out of the lives of others". To Strether, happiness lies not so much in taking as in giving. An achieved refinement of consciousness enables him to transcend the self by releasing its inexhaustible freedom for the benefit of others, and by placing others in the fertilizing possibilities of life.

Refinement in Strether is dramatically identified with that process of conscious self-culture, which reverses the life-denying rebuttals of value by a conventional, stereotyped material civilisation. Strether does not refine life, but rather refines his own selfhood in order that the self is once more placed in the normalcy of all life. Thus he sheds his Thespian mask of a Saviour, and becomes a "seer," whereby he becomes a Saviour unto himself rather than to others. The self which starts out to redeem others, by the dramatic return to the normal, becomes redeemed by "others".

In Strether's character, James has not only dramatised in terms of spiritual refinement the Emersonian assertion of the infinitude of the private person, but also demonstrates his perfection in a field of consciousness made vitally accessible to public influences. Henry James transcends the transcendentalist view of the self by completing the process of refinement in the individual, who returns to the happy sanity of life after quietly achieving an apotheosis of himself. At the end of the novel Strether is verily the ensainted individual restored to the serene currents of time, life and vision.

Refinement, according to Henry James, is not idealism, because it weds the two orders of life, the ideal and the real; it designates a condition and a state of life in which the ideal and the real combine in mutually fructifying patterns. Pure ideality can corrupt, even as absolute evil can contaminate life. Refinement, as James sees it, is a state of animated consciousness in which no truth of life suffers loss or deprivation.

The Wings of the Dove extends the theme of conversion and refinement revealed in *The Ambassadors,* and enacts its moral and spiritual implications in the developing consciousness of the young

Merton Densher through the radiating impact of the refined and self-seeing Milly Theale. Milly's transcendence of the self and her final gesture of love and forgiveness are instrumental in driving away the dark clouds of moral ugliness from Densher's consciousness, and reaffirming his innate moral strength.

The sensitive, perceptive and cultured Densher is a journalist by profession. Unlike Flack, in *The Reverberator*, Densher is not vulgar and meddlesome, but is highly refined and gentlemanly. Son of "migrating parents", a chaplain and a copyist of pictures, Densher has had a sound scholastic and collegiate education in Germany and England. His being sent to America by his employers on an assignment is proof enough that he is a capable and conscientious journalist. Henry James dramatises the education of this intelligent and perceptive young man in the novel, and the setting for the drama is the sordidly materialistic society of London. The expansion and enrichment of Densher's consciousness takes place in a society in which the materialistic drive is predominant, and spontaneous sentiment is conspicuously absent. In the final transfiguration of Densher, James stresses that it is only through morality that one achieves humanity, and not through mere manners, or mere material power, through a contact with the depths of the inner life, and not through an easy familiarity with its sensuous surfaces of facts and objects.

In Densher's London, money is the controlling factor. People think "tremendously of money," and consequently subordinate human values to economic considerations. Everyone in this society "who had anything to give... got at least its value in return."[11] Relationships and ties between human beings are established not on the basis of sentiment or affection, but rather on the possibilities of economic and material advancement. London society, according to Kate, is a "strange and dreadful monster, calculated to devour the unwary, to abase the proud, to scandalize the good."[12] In such a society, where Mammon is worshiped as the only God, evil manifests itself as inhumanity and immorality. Honour and morality are at a discount in it, and the sacred laws of Nature are scornfully violated. Kate's father refuses to have anything to do with his poor daughters, as they do not mean anything to him. Mrs. Lowder disapproves of Densher because he is poor, and she wants Kate to marry the rich Lord Mark. Kate's father and sister desire to benefit themselves by entrusting Kate to the

care of the rich Mrs. Lowder. Milly is considered to be extraordinarily lucky by virtue of her fabulous wealth.

A traditionally high standard of life is possible only when one has the required economic means for it. It is money which would give men freedom, power and pleasure. Such a society is positively harmful and dangerous by reason of its civilised manners and superficial glitter. Once Kate understands the tone and temper of social existence, she has the least hesitation in bowing to the dictates of the worldly world. She falls a willing victim to the corrupt and corrupting world. In a world of vulgarity and rapaciousness, where the material urge is unrefined by natural sentiment or moral fervour, Kate is quite willing, as she tells Densher, to do what she does not like. It is to this complex world of vulgarity, immorality and superficial polish that the innocent American girl, Milly, comes. Milly is the eager American Eve in search of life and experience. She is a vessel of consciousness, whose ordeal it is to make herself happy in this strange and monstrous world. Henry James suggests, paradoxically, that a corrupt and corrupting society is the biggest obstacle to human refinement, and yet refinement is achieved only through experience of, and involvement in the corrupting and destructive elements of life.

The tragedy of Milly Theale is enacted in a typical Jamesian situation. Knowledge of the destructive power of the world in which she lives does not help Milly to save herself. She is warned by Kate of the dangers of her (Maggie's) full participation in the life of a diabolical world. Kate makes it clear to Milly that London society is no place for innocents like Milly. Milly enters this world with eyes wide open and suffers the consequences of her proud entry. Her fatal flaw lies in her underestimation of the power of evil, and in her lack of adequate realization that knowledge is hopelessly without resources in the face of destructive evil. She is innocent, but like other Jamesian heroines, she too is intelligent, perceptive and introspective. She knows that she is in the midst of malevolent forces. But in the "intensity of pride," Milly takes a deliberate plunge into the foul waters of corruption and unscrupulousness. She is intelligent enough to conclude that Lord Mark is a "potentially insolent noble," and that Kate is brutal as a "panther". Although this knowledge makes her vaguely afraid of them, it does not scare her away from them.

A "young person conscious of a great capacity for life,"[1] Milly is unfortunately incapacitated for an intense participation in life by her mortal illness. Her being a millionairess dazzles the eyes of the society to which she comes in search of felt life. She is admired and adored by Mrs. Lowder and Kate, who are charming and kind to her. Poor Milly does not suspect that their charm and good manners are a mask, hiding effectively their diabolical nature and rapaciousness. She is thrilled by England, and she feels "she had never, she might believe, been in such a state of vibration, her sensibility was almost too sharp for her comfort."[13] Perched on the high Alpine mountainside, and "looking down on the kingdoms of the earth," Milly wonders whether she should not take the full impact of life. She thinks, "it would not be for her a question of a flying leap and thereby of a quick escape. It would be a question of taking full in the face the whole assault of life, to the general muster of which indeed her face might have been directly presented as she sat there on her rock."[14] Eager as she is for experience, Milly ignores the fact that her mortal illness has incapacitated her for the thrills of a felt life. The "truth" about Milly is that she is mortally ill, but she has chosen the world because it is the world of Densher, whom she loves. Engaging herself in this world, she suffers its pains and cruelty with a courage and nobility which is deeply touching.

A greedy and cruel world cannot imagine Milly to be any different from itself. It is not mortality, but rather a hunger for immortality in her love for Densher, that engages Milly on behalf of those "living under water," who are propelled by their subterranean drives of greed and selfishness. The morally diseased world is not the right place for the innocent Milly, and this is symbolically conveyed by the diseased body of Milly. The dove must become pure wings to be its real self. But mortal as she is, the pull of the earth is irresistible. The body draws the spirit into the worldly world, and the lonely "survivor of a general wreck" hopes for life and happiness. Milly seeks the advice of the celebrated physician, Sir Luke Strett, who tells her, "You've the right to be happy... you must accept any form in which happiness may come."[15] To Milly, who has a right to be happy like any other young woman, happiness may not come in the shape in which it usually does to the majority of young women. The doctor further tells her, "is n't to 'live' exactly what I'm trying to persuade you to take the trouble to do?"[16] Sir Luke is here speaking

of a higher life (life in quotes), which starting as a romantic attachment may fulfil itself in spiritual detachment.

Milly ponders over the doctor's advice after she leaves his clinic to wander in the streets of London. Sickness, suffering and death are common to all human beings, and the awareness of a shared life of doom should prepare Milly to face the "great common anxiety" which is the "practical question of life". Spiritual refinement lies in a knowing acceptance of life and of one's lot in it. Milly acquires this refinement, but human as she is, she cannot reconcile herself to the absence of home and happiness in her life. She makes a deliberate attempt to love and to live, but asks herself, "would not her value, for the man who should marry her, be precisely in the ravage of her disease? She might n't last, but her money would."[17] The world sees no value in her, apart from her fabulous wealth. The "pink dawn of apotheosis" comes to her in the episode in which she is taken by Lord Mark to see the Bronzino, which is said to resemble her. To be taken for the portrait is to be taken for dead, and to die valued only for her wealth, like the "great personage" of the portrait with her "recorded jewels" and her "brocaded wasted reds," is to die a permanent spiritual death. Milly must then cut across the ambiguous surfaces of her environment and probe into the deep, if ambivalent, springs of life. The cataleptic indirections of her convalescent situation must enlarge and extend themselves into the direct glow of a spiritual aura.

The Bronzino brings into Milly's consciousness the realisation of an order of permanence and value which extends the personal world of love into the impersonal world of art. A work of art condenses life first to its physical essence of form and then, through the alchemical miracle of self-conscious sensibility, and refinement of imagination, transfigures it into a pervasive presence. Milly realises that on the plane of her own individual life, as in a work of art, by the arrestment of action through the almost allegorical intercession of love, she may discover an unsuspected enhancement of life, an infinitely enduring form of perfection. Love in actuality may be a waste of spirit in the expanse of time; but in art, and, in love related to art, life is all permanence, all intensity, all discrimination. The artistic analogue functioning through the physical syndrome of Milly's invalidism gives to Milly an intimation of transcendence which achieves value at the expense of fact, but keeps what is beautiful not only

as an archetype of the beautiful, but also fixes it in the higher context of an autonomous, self-perpetuating truth which is a kin in its power and potency to destiny itself. In other words, in her wider consciousness, as in organic art, beauty presses itself continuously through a charmed field of truth to become joined to Beatitude. By renouncing the life of widths, Milly affirms in herself, and through herself in others, the life of depths.

Milly is dear to the world because of her "paying power" in an almost Veblenian sense. The Denshers and the Kates of the world nestle under the wings of the dove for economic protection. They would continue to enjoy her wealth, but they would be made to realise that Milly is angelic by virtue of her inestimable spiritual qualities. The Wings of the Dove are precious, not because they have soft, downy feathers but because they enable the Dove to soar to great spiritual heights. The "beautiful delusion" of Milly's happiness is violently shattered by Lord Mark's exposure of Densher's hypocrisy. Mark tries to woo and wed Milly unsuccessfully, and, at the instigation of Kate, he reveals the truth to Milly. Envy betrays hypocrisy, but love forgives them both. Milly "turns her face to the wall" and dies, but before her death she sends for Densher and forgives him. Once fully conscious of her own destiny, Milly exercises her selfhood in favour of its spiritual ultimate, namely, charity. In a predatory and selfish world, where there is no reciprocity of love, Milly can only "give," but not receive things. She tells Mark who comes courting her, "I give and give and give - there you are; stick to me as close as you like, and see if I don't. Only I can't listen or receive or accept - I can't agree. I can't make a bargain."[18]

A greedy and compromising world, in its philistine self-assurance, has taken it for granted that Milly too is greedy and compromising; and therefore it is that Kate is eager to know from Densher whether Milly had "remembered him" in her will. Kate fears that Milly might have taken sweet revenge on Densher for his hypocrisy by leaving nothing to him of her fortune. Milly does not feel that she is too good for the world, but is pained that it has misjudged her. That the world is not barren of virtue, and that it is quite capable of self-knowledge, is demonstrated by Densher, who symbolises the weak and erring but introspective and penitent mankind. By becoming really the Angel, Milly Theale becomes the unobtrusive, but wholly effective evangel of true love wedded to charity.

Like all Jamesian heroes, Densher too is intelligent, percipient and self-critical. The novel dramatises the choice which Densher is called upon to make between two types of love, namely, the possessive greedy love, and the altruistic and sacrificing love. In the final choice he makes lies the measure of his refinement. The conflict in his mind is between passionate romantic loyalty on one side, and a deep sense of obligation and gratitude on the other, and out of this conflict evolves his character. The stages of his moral growth are very carefully drawn. The weak-willed Densher is, at first, wax in the hands of Kate whom he loves passionately. "Handled" by Kate, Densher agrees to "do as she liked - his own liking might come off as it would."[19] He is easily persuaded into executing the diabolical plan of Kate, who declares that she can do things which she does not like. From a sense of loyalty to the woman whom he loves, Densher resolves not "to give away the woman one loved, but to back her up in her mistakes - once they had gone a certain length - that was perhaps chief among the inevitabilities of the abjection of love,"[20] He is completely dominated by Kate. He says, "I'm doing nothing - and shall not, I assure you, do anything but what I'm told."[21] The abjection of love blinds him to the moral considerations of the diabolical role which he is called upon to play by Kate. He tells her, "I do nothing for anyone in the world, but you. But for you I'll do anything."[22] The cunning Kate fully exploits the weak-willed Densher's abject subordination to her. Convinced that Milly, who loves Densher deeply, would die and leave him her fortune, Kate tutors Densher, "Please her; make her see how clever you are - only without letting her know that you'are trying. If you're charming to her you've nothing else to do."[23] Densher is shocked by her unscrupulous disingenuousness and asks her if she wants him to be a "brute of a humbug to her," (Milly).

In agreeing to be a humbug to Milly, Densher agrees to be a humbug to himself. He is called upon to be what he is truly not by nature. He has great "horror of moral ugliness," and is not happy about the role assigned to him. He perceives that Mrs. Lowder's drawing-room is "operatively, ominously... cruel" and that ugly objects were "a portentous negation of his own world of thought."[24] Although very loyal to Kate, he feels all the time that he is not doing the right thing by the "little American girl who had been kind to him in New York and to whom certainly... he was perfectly willing to be kind."[25] He feels the "oddity... of his having sunk deep. It was sinking because it was all doing what Kate had conceived for him;

it was not in the least doing - and that had been his notion of his life - anything he himself had conceived."[26] He is unhappy for his "so extremely manipulated state" and for his being "perpetually bent to her (Kate's) will."[27] In his association with the two young women, he instinctively and unconsciously notes the differences between them, and shows a preference for Milly. In the party given by Milly in Venice, Densher sees Milly dressed in white and looking splendid. Kate asks him if he does not think her "good enough now," and he replies, "Ah, my dear, you know how good I think her."[28] Milly looks "younger and fairer" than Kate, whom he finds surprisingly "wanting in lustre," as "a striking young presence she (Kate) was practically superseded."[29]

As their plot thickens, Kate reveals to Densher the darker depths of her own character, and becomes, unwittingly, the means of his self-discovery and moral regeneration. After the death of Milly, the lovers are "damned civil" to each other, and are all the time aware of the chasm that is opening up between them. After the final interview with Milly, in which he is "forgiven, dedicated, blessed," Densher is intensely aware of something beautiful that has happened to him, which he finds he is unable to describe in words. "The essence was that something had happened to him too beautiful and too sacred to describe."[30] His reawakened moral self has had a vision of an order of goodness, which is timeless and deathless. The spirit of the Dove pervades his consciousness and refines his moral and spiritual self. He does not require to read the last letter of Milly, which he gives unopened to Kate, because he 'knows' what it contains. Kate destroys this missive of grace, and "sickens" Densher by wanting to know if Milly would remember him in her will. Densher moves still further away from Kate, when he extracts the confession from her that it was she who had sent Lord Mark to Venice to tell Milly of the truth of their betrothal. Kate wants to know why Densher had not denied the whole thing to Milly. Densher answers, "I would n't have made my denial, in such conditions, only to take it back afterwards". Kate asks Densher, "Oh, you would have broken with me to make your denial a truth? You would have chucked me to save your conscience?", and Densher replies, "I could n't have done anything less."[31]

Slowly but surely, it becomes clear to Densher that Kate is rapacious, diabolical and cruel. But he has the honesty to acknowledge his own share in the crime, and will not, therefore, discard her

or desert her heartlessly. He offers to marry her on the condition that they reject the fortune which has come to him from Milly. If Kate wants money, she can have it without him. He tells her, "You lose nothing else. I make over to you every penny."[32] Kate loses "nothing else" because, as Densher sees it, the loss of Densher means nothing to her, compared to her loss of Milly's millions. Kate wants Densher's word of honour that he is not in love with Milly's memory. This he cannot give, because Milly's memory is his "love," and he requires "no other". It is thus clear to both that they cannot marry, for they can "never be again as they were." It is ironical that at the moment of triumph, Kate finds herself parting from her lover for ever. Kate gains a fortune through wickedness, but loses her lover; Milly loses her life and fortunes, but gains the eternal gratitude and love of Densher by her love, forgiveness and sacrifice.

The value of refinement is, ironically enough, affirmed by emphasizing the paradoxical nature of its occurrence in the story. Kate, ignorant of, and uncultured in, true refinement harps on its achievements, "There are refinements... I mean of consciousness, of sensation, of appreciation... men don't know. They know in such matters nothing but what women show them."[33] Achieving the knowledge of refinement, through the tortuous indirection of experience, Densher discovers that in observing and exercising the truth he must inevitably lose Kate, although she has, partly awakened him to its presence in him and in the world. Refinement when it does arrive terminates what might have been a marriage of convenience; but this dramatic separation of the intended couple leads to a true marriage of spirit between the quick and the dead, the regenerated Densher and the disembodied Milly Theale, the renewed Adam and the redeemed Eve. Like Lambert Strether, Densher also owes his expanded and refined consciousness to the influence of women. The love and charity of Milly refines Densher's moral nature by purifying it of such base elements as selfishness, immorality and greed. An awareness of appearance and reality, of the obstinate facts of life and their links with universal destiny, is thus the measure of one's refinement.

In *The Golden Bowl,* Henry James reiterates the pervasive centrality of refinement in human happiness. Dramatised in the novel is the moral education and refinement of the aesthetic Prince Amerigo through the conflicting, but complementary, influences of the innocent, but maturing, Maggie Verver on one hand and the corrupt and corrupt-

ing Charlotte Stant on the other. Like Lambert Strether and Merton Densher, the Prince gains "more from women than he had ever lost by them."[34] The Prince's refinement is made possible, firstly, by his percipient consciousness and responsive sensibility, and, secondly by the refinement which his wife herself achieves through a knowledge and awareness of evil. The Prince's refinement consists in his knowing and affirming the dangers of over-prizing the "appearance" of a beauty which is totally devoid of good. The "touchstones" of aestheticism, taste, civility and good manners are by themselves nothing, and should not have an existence in life, independent of the good and the moral. The fusion of the aesthetic and the moral principles of human life is, thus, the measure of human refinement.

The Prince's famous Italian ancestor had discovered America, and thereby released its infinite material resources to Europe. Like his ancestor, Amerigo goes to seek the material resources of the Ververs, and in the process discovers the unsuspected moral wealth of America. Henry James's idea of a refined Western civilization is one, in which European art, manners and culture are wedded to American morality. In this light, the significance of Adam Verver's life mission becomes clear. Towards the end of the novel, Adam Verver, returns to the "American City" on the sacred mission of endowing it with the art treasures which he had collected in Europe. It is the fulfilment of this ambition which, to a very great extent, lessens his pain and sorrow at having had to part from his beloved daughter, Maggie.

Henry James does not, however, say that American morality is perfect and flawless. The "spontaneous moral sense" of America is very often coupled with innocence, with fear of experience, of evil. Born as human beings are to sin, the 'golden bowl' of their lives has a crack, despite its sheer loveliness and its gilded exterior. Evil rears its fatal, ugly head constantly, and one cannot but take notice of it. Not to know evil, argues human life unknown. It is when evil is encountered, and overcome that the individual self is morally refined. The American, like all other fellow-human beings, faces this basic human problem of converting a naturalistic confrontation of evil into a personal resource of refined selfhood. Europe, with her ancient culture, civilization and art, offers the maximum opportunities for the American Adam and the American Eve to refine themselves. The European, who has only outer refinement, turns to America for those qualities of the heart and spirit, which make his inner refinement pos-

sible, and which, it appears, are denied by Europe. In *The Golden Bowl* is dramatised the achievement of total refinement by Maggie, which in its turn, opens up new horizons of awareness in the Prince, enabling him to achieve his inner refinement, and thereby complement and augment his outer refinement. Maggie's refinement offers the Prince the mastery of self-conversion whereby he may achieve a safe passage across the hitherto unmapped abyss of his selfhood. An increase of refinement, and the resulting enhancement of life - both brought about by the birth of a moral sense in the Prince, whose adverse intimation of its absence in himself is a psychological precondition of refinement - are the central premises of the novel. Interlinked with the achievement of his refinement is the refinement of Maggie's moral sense, which is awakened to the disparity between the apparent and the real in human life.

A scion of an old princely family of Rome, Amerigo is a young man of taste, good breeding and sensibility. The Ververs regard him as a "rarity, an object of beauty, an object of price."[35] Thinking about his forthcoming marriage, and reviewing his past life mentally, the self-introspective Prince, as he wanders in the streets of London, tells himself that he should be a good son-in-law to Adam Verver. "If there was one thing in the world, the young man, at this juncture, clearly intended, it was to be much more decent as a son-in-law than lots of fellows he could think of had shown themselves in that character."[36]

The Prince recollects with some pride that he had been the heart-throb of many women, of at least "twenty women," and his idea of rewarding them was to make love to them. These are things of the past, and he starts with the best of matrimonial intentions towards Maggie Verver. He tells himself, "Capture had crowned the pursuit - or success, as he would otherwise have put it, had rewarded virtue."[37] The young man is, however, "serious," instead of being "gay". "A sobriety that might have consorted with failure sat in his handsome face."[38] The Prince has grave misgivings regarding the future of his wedded life, because he is intensely conscious of his inherited past. He tells Maggie Verver that there are "two parts" in him. "One is made up of the history, the doings, the marriages, the crimes, the follies, the boundless *betises* of"[39] his ancestors. The second part is made up of his "single self" which, aware of its limitations, seeks limitless refinement. He knows that history links him up with

crime, selfishness, folly and violence, and sincerely desires to free himself from the taint of history. He wants to be taught to see himself, to see others, and to see the truth, objectively, however unpleasant these might be to him personally. He tells Fanny Assingham, "I can pretty well do anything... I shall always want, your eyes, through them I wish to look - even at any risk of their showing me what I may n't like. For then, I shall know. And of that I shall never be afraid."[40]

Coupled with his terror of his tainted ancestral past, and his displeasure with his own personal past, is his fear that he is lacking in moral sense. Commenting on his lack of moral sense, the Prince tells Mrs. Assingham, "The moral, dear Mrs. Assingham. I mean, always, as you others consider... Your moral sense works by steam - it sends you up like a rocket. Ours is slow and steep and unlighted, with so many steps missing."[41] It is this Mephistophilean self-criticism, and Faustian self-awareness, that redeems the Prince in the end, making of him a Second Adam, a Promethean Hero doubled into the Christian. Oscar Cargill describes the Prince as being "amoral" or rather, uninstructed in morality. The alleviating feature of his character is his serious moral concern for himself. To the Prince, character cannot exist independent of moral sense; and it is "character" which he admires most in others, and is anxious to cultivate it himself. He wants his wife to have it. "He expected her, desired her, to have character; his wife should have it, and he was n't afraid of her having too much. He had had, in his earlier time, to deal with plenty of people who had had it; notably with the three or four ecclesiastics, his great uncle, the Cardinal, above all, who had taken a hand and played part in his education... He was thus fairly on the look-out for this characteristic in his most intimate, as she was to become, of his associates. He encouraged it when it appeared."[42] The "golden bowl" of the Prince's character, despite all its charm and brilliance, has a basic crack, in as much as it is wanting in moral sense. The Prince is aware of it, but, uncertain as he is of his moral moorings, he is swept off his feet by the irresistible tide of his passions and by the muddy flood of his shameful personal history. Order is, however, restored, and calm established, through the infusion of "moral sense" by Maggie Verver, whose rare display of character - of endurance, of silent courage, of love and forgiveness - wins back for her, in the end, the love of her husband, a love in which admiration has become adoration.

Right from the beginning, the Prince shows a deep concern for the success of his marriage. In the episode in which he and Charlotte hunt the London shops for a wedding-gift for Maggie, they come across the cracked golden bowl in the Bloomsbury shop; and as Charlotte suggests it as a wedding-gift, the Prince declines to take it. He confesses that he is superstitious and that a cracked golden bowl, however exquisite and lovely, portends evil for his happiness, safety, and marriage. The picture of him that emerges is one of a well-bred youngman, thoroughly charming and deeply affectionate, self-assured, but deferential and capable of sincere gratitude to the Ververs and Fanny Assingham, and full of good intentions and good faith all around. When the well-meaning Prince is about to open a new and glorious chapter in his personal life, history intrudes on it in the person of Charlotte to swing him back to his past of crime, folly and evil. The Prince and Charlotte are old lovers, who had separated because of their poverty. The Europeanised Charlotte too, like the Prince, has no moral sense, but, unlike him, she does not have any desire to acquire it. She is an intimate friend of Maggie, as they had been school-mates at Paris, and she comes to London to attend Maggie's wedding, and also to spend a single intimate hour with her old lover, Prince Amerigo. Her reappearance in his life makes the Prince frankly uneasy and unhappy. Mrs. Assingham also knows their past, and is disturbed over the reappearance of Charlotte. But she believes in their good faith, and in fact, Charlotte and the Prince behave "beautifully" for some time.

After her marriage, Maggie, who adores her father, feels that he is alone and unhappy. In order that the void in his emotional life might be happily filled up, she persuades her father to marry her dear friend, Charlotte, whose beauty, charm and social brilliance have greatly impressed the little millionaire. Partly to please his daughter, and partly to satisfy his own fascination, Adam Verver marries Charlotte. The simple-minded and innocent father and daughter mistakenly think that they have solved each other's problems satisfactorily. Their simplicity and innocence are liabilities in a world, where to be ignorant of evil is oneself to be evil. Seated at his table, Adam Verver appears to Amerigo like a "little boy shyly entertaining in virtue of some improvised rank," and Maggie on one occasion, strikes Fanny as "a mischievous child, playing on the floor..."[43] The father and the daughter are not separated by their marriages, but are drawn together more intimately than ever before. The birth of a son to Maggie

adds to their felicity, and they rejoice in each other, and each in the child. The consequence of this is that the old lovers, Charlotte and the Prince, are left more and more together. The paradox of experience, which can be resolved only through refinement, is dramatised once again; the new content of experience establishes at once a new connection, and compels a new isolation.

Mrs. Assingham rightly observes that "a person can mostly feel but one passion - one tender passion, that is - at a time"[44] Maggie's fault lies in trying to be deeply devoted to, and intimately fond of, both her husband and her father. There is some truth in what Charlotte says of Maggie, although it does not in the least justify her adultery with the Prince. She tells Mrs. Assingham, "Maggie thinks more, on the whole, of fathers than of husbands."[45] Maggie adores her husband, but does "not think of him". The blissfully ignorant and innocent Ververs either leave their spouses alone or depute them to parties, banquets and balls. Charlotte and the Prince feel "immensely alone", and being young, hale and healthy, with a sensual appetite for life and an aesthetic capacity for its enjoyment, they cannot go about indefinitely in the "state of our primitive parents before the Fall."[46] They become lovers once again. The onslaught of passion, beauty and freedom breaks down the pious resolution of the Prince to remain 'decent' and faithful and grateful to the Ververs. At Matcham, where he goes with Charlotte for a party, he finds everything melting "to feed his sense of beauty", and the day blooming like a large "fragrant flower" to be gathered up by him; and he considers his freedom as "perfect and rounded and lustrous as some huge precious pearl."[47] "Every voice in the great house was a call to the ingenuities and impunities of pleasure; every echo was a defiance of difficulty, doubt or danger; every aspect of the picture a glowing plea for the immediate, and as with plenty more to come, was another phase of the spell."[48]

The "golden bowl" of Maggie's married life, despite its outer harmony and brilliance, is cracked at the base. The marriage bond is flawed by the crime of adultery committed by her husband and Charlotte. Living with "such good people," the Prince and Charlotte practise "so much pretended nobleness, cleverness, tenderness," and thus make their crime doubly heinous and treacherous. The self-critical Prince, however, examines his position, and 'deep' in the bosom of this falsity of position glowed the red spark of his in-

extinguishable sense of a higher and braver propriety."[43] It is this consciousness of a higher propriety and a nobler civility in the Prince that enables and authenticates his moral education.

It is a chance occurrence which confirms Maggie's unshaped suspicion of her husband's illicit relationship with Charlotte. One day she steps into a shop to buy a birth-day gift for her father, and buys the same golden bowl which Charlotte and the Prince had. earlier, thought of buying for her. Feeling that he had cheated Maggie over the sale of the cracked bowl, the shopkeeper arranges to meet her at her place with the intention of refunding part of her money. In the reception room, he recognizes the portraits of Charlotte and the Prince, and recounts to Maggie their visit to his shop with all the details; her suspicions confirmed, Maggie sends for Fanny, who blandly lies to her about her own knowledge of the whole affair. Fanny then seizes the bowl and dashes it to the ground in an attempt to destroy the tell-tale object, and thus avoid unpleasantness and bitterness for all concerned. The Prince himself enters the room dramatically, and is confronted by Maggie's knowledge of the whole affair. He now knows that Maggie knows everything, but he desires to know how much Adam Verver knows. Maggie does not give him a direct reply, but tells him to find it out himself. The scene is memorable for the admirable way in which Maggie conducts herself. She does not directly accuse the Prince to his face, nor does she thunder out her "protests of passion, the rages of jealousy." In fact, she gives him time to regain his composure, and quietly makes him realize that she knows everything. Maggie could have brought her husband within her power through her knowledge of truth, but she abstains from doing so. She rather chooses to bring him, not under the control of a personal system of expediency - for that would be tantmount to the unpardonable sin of meddling with another human heart - but under the free, untramelled impersonal influence of truth itself. By thus disengaging truth from its accessory human attributes, and from the demands of a furtive vindictiveness, she lets her husband's consciousness open out into the illuminating light of reality. Where personal complicity would have benighted truth and deprived it of its moral transforming power, her impersonal strategy of a knowledge detached from will preserves its vitality. And thus it is, when Amerigo comes under the power of truth, he comes within the range of Maggie's influence, too.

Mrs. Assingham is right when she tells her husband that the Prince does not "really care" for Charlotte. There is no reason to doubt the sincerity of the Prince when, after the golden bowl is broken, he tells Maggie, "You've never been more sacred to me than you were at the hour - unless perhaps you've become so at this one."[50] At the time he had seen the golden bowl with Charlotte, Maggie was sacred to him, and she is now more so when he realises her inestimable qualities of the heart and spirit. It dawns on him that there is an order of goodness which triumphs, not by retaliation, not by revenge, but by love, understanding, patience and suffering.

Maggie quietly alters the tenor of her life. She renews social activity with her husband, and, on one occasion, she visits the British Museum to read more about her husband's family history. Charlotte is made to feel the isolation gradually, although she does not know that Maggie knows everything. Maggie's capacity for self-criticism enables her to view her situation objectively. She realises that she had "abandoned" Charlotte and the Prince, and that she had "accepted passively the funny form" of their lives. She is able to see Charlotte's situation also objectively and pity her. The perception of evil refines and strengthens her moral nature, bringing her best faculties into operation. The knowledge of the provisional absurdity of her married state awakens her to the ultimate sublimity of the state of love.

The terrace scene at the Fawns is important for the light it throws on the characters of Maggie and Charlotte. Adam Verver, Amerigo, Fanny Assingham, and Charlotte are playing the game of bridge in the smoking-room, and Maggie walks on the terrace observing the card-players through the windows. She observes, "the fact of her father sitting, all unsounded and unblinking, between them, the fact of Charlotte keeping it up, keeping up everything, across the table, with her husband beside her; the fact of Fanny Assingham, wonderful creature, placed opposite to them, and knowing more about each, probably when one came to think, than either of them knew of either."[51] When Maggie observes this surface calm and harmony, her first impulse is to expose the real natures of Charlotte and the Prince, but she controls herself masterfully, because she had already decided to bear everything "for love". Maggie is intelligent enough to foresee the consequences of an explosive show-down with Charlotte and the Prince. Such a move would permanently sever her relations with them, and it would also cause her father great pain and suffering.

By suffering the anguish and torment uncomplainingly, she lets her husband understand of what stuff she is made, and thus brings about a change of heart in him.

Maggie, as she paces on the terrace, knows that her husband had not spoken to Charlotte about Maggie's knowledge of their betrayal. She feels happy at the thought that she and her husband are now one in their knowledge of Charlotte's ignorance. "They were together, he and she, close together - whereas Charlotte, though rising there radiantly before her, was really off in some darkness of space that would steep her in solitude and harass her with care. The heart of the princess swelled, accordingly, even in her abasement..."[32] Charlotte, presently, emerges on to the terrace, and is brazen enough to put on an air of injured innocence and enquire about her wrongs to Maggie. Charlotte represents an order of evil which is softly deadly, brilliantly false, and ruthlessly diabolical. In the garden episode in which Charlotte accuses Maggie of trying to alienate her husband from her, Charlotte assumes the role of a wronged wife. Maggie swallows the accusation silently because her moral nature has risen to a point from where it can regard evil with patient understanding and compassionate acceptance. It is the nature of evil to be aggressive, to be loud-mouthed and pretentious, and nothing is gained by opposing and contradicting it. Maggie pities Charlotte, for she sees the hand of evil too active in the life of a woman, who is otherwise charming and efficient. The Prince calls Charlotte "stupid" because of her incapacity to understand the moral growth in Maggie. It is, indeed, true that Maggie bears everything "for love," and thus demonstrates the redemptive power of love. By her love for her husband, love for her father, and understanding love for Charlotte, Maggie saves their lives from ruin and disintegration.

Maggie, through a suffering awareness, brings about in herself, as in others, those recognitions of selfhood which enact the final epiphany of love. Hitherto, love had been partial, retrenched of the complex vitalities of life. Love had been wedded too closely to crisp, unilateral definitions of loyalty, fidelity, filial and social obligation. It had been invested with an exclusive existence of its own, and cut off from other circuits of life, and it was unmindful of others, of other sensations and other possibilities. Maggie breaks down the dykes on which love had dammed up the free, forthgoing current of life, and lets life and love melt and flow into each other, forming

together one free, circumambient reality. Love is extended into the vibrant openness of life; and at the end of the story, love is a cipher which attenuates, absorbs and unifies all realities, and all individual contingencies of social reality. Love is not duty alone, loyalty alone, memory alone, vision alone, but all these things put together. Maggie transforms herself into a vehicle of this enhanced life acting through love; for, in her, and through her, love has already become one with Grace. And thus refinement, in the extended metaphor of love, becomes identical with freedom, which, on a human level, is charity, and, on the divine level, Grace. Refinement, in its essence, is an imitation of Grace. By intelligence, love, endurance and charity, Maggie brings about a change in her husband, which he humbly acknowledges in the end when he says, "I see nothing but you."[53]

The "golden bowl" is a multivalent symbol standing for a continuous spectrum of moral, spiritual and cultural refinement. Its structure and its structural flaw, as a single symbolic and artistic complex, dramatise the conflicts and ambivalences in the consciousness of all the characters both in general terms and in specific instances. In a general way, the "golden bowl" illustrates the allegorical relationship between good and evil. Perfection of life is not always a desirable consummation, for perfection may itself lead to the unbearable pressures of neglected instinct and repressed life; and it may unknowingly involve, too, life in the fettering complicities of virtue which, without the open, healthy choices of freedom, forces itself into the dark recoils of self-indulgence, or a hypersensitive hostility towards the world. If the "golden bowl" as a perfect piece of art stands for purity, the crack within it is a symbol of the sinful temptation which may flow from a virtue unsupported by a contact with evil. Maggie transcends the limited perspective of refinement, because she achieves an order of consciousness, which includes the perfection of purity as well as the freedom of imperfection. It is this encapsulated freedom, which her love contains, that redeems the Prince by proffering him not the absolutism of love, but the unfettering freedom of life itself. When Maggie thus becomes the embodiment of that moral refinement, for which the golden bowl stands in the abstract, the world outgrows the physical necessity of retaining the golden bowl as an artistic memento. It is therefore cast aside without any sense of loss, because the symbol has ultimately made room for the truth, even as the perspective of beauty yields itself to the horizon of Grace transcending the landscapes ot man's sensate culture.

THE VISION : CONCLUSION

In the foregoing chapters, an attempt has been made to trace the development of the Jamesian idea of refinement as it is revealed both in the individual novels and also in the organic patterns into which James's creative process organized itself. The theme of refinement and its variations flow from the type of conceptual reality which Henry James had at the very outset recognized as the central fact of his artistic creation. James was primarily interested not in the Protean variety of physical experience, but rather in the deeper experience of intensity, in the truth of human selfhood as it revealed itself in the continuous extension of mental awareness, and in the widening of the frontiers of human consciousness as dramatised in the rhythms of change and growth, adaptation and fulfilment of the human personality. Although in his novels there is a virtual elimination of the physical substrata of individual and social existence, the deliberate renunciation of these factors only contributes to the solidity and the density of the inner life. Convinced of the supremacy of the values of the profounder life of man, Henry James proceeded to enact the omitted possibilities of life in many areas of American and European culture, and in doing so he projected his own fiction as "the uncreated conscience" of his race.

Henry James's artistic instrumentation was perfected to such a point of preciosity that the novel acquired the kind of self-sufficiency, which alone could bear the weight of the moment carrying in itself the fateful contradistinctions of the past and the future, of freedom and necessity, of social manners and individual morals. James's personality and his artistic sensibility were both organically involved in exploring those combinations and approximations of the outer and inner events, which made the centres of life's reality accessible to the individual through the conversion and the metamorphosis of the facts of conscience into the values of consciousness. Refinement in the individuals and in the complex patterns of culture is, above all, the *elan vital* which keeps this possibility open, and its processes creative. As one looks back at the novels of Henry James as a syntactical progression of his artistic vision of life, one becomes aware of the fact that there are certain elements of human experience, and certain modes of human estimation, which clearly define the patterns of growth, and the unification of the Jamesian sensibility.

As a precondition to the enrichment of experience and the enhancement of consciousness, Henry James lets his positive heroes and heroines withdraw from the incommodious necessity of commonplace facts and vulgar choices. These characters, such as Christopher Newman, Isabel Archer, Lambert Strether, and Milly Teale, are in one manner or another excluded from the superficial drama of life, and they are sent out of the world, as it were, to acquire the moral strength of achieved self-knowledge in order to judge the world and its ways. Their estimation of the world, however, does not result in an abandonment of the world, but rather in an affirmation of the world's possibilities as seen in the light of higher system of values. In the reflected splendour of their individual refinement, the world acquires a power wedded to glory. The final act of judgement itself becomes transformed into a movement of charity which has divested itself of the ambiguities of judgement. Nowhere does Henry James seek to resolve the paradoxes of life; he rather illuminates and humanizes them by dramatically relating them to the freedom of refined selfhood which must ultimately discover its own inner core of truth at the centre of reality. Henry James was not concerned with social or artistic success. He had no gargantuan appetite for the fleeting facts of momentary social conduct and ephemeral human behaviour. He was more actively concerned with the interest that life evokes through its indestructible essences as they offer themselves yieldingly to the percipient vision. The quest for the enduring substance of life must be fulfilled through the habit of responding to its pulses and its influences across all barriers, social, ethical, or spiritual. Refinement, as Henry James developed and dramatised the idea, includes these three factors of his imagination: firstly, the universality of human experience, particularly in its tragic areas dominated by suffering, sacrifice, deprivation and loneliness; secondly, the supreme obligation of the responsive individual to discover the indestructible life which must lie at the heart of the life hurt; and, thirdly, the acquisition of a capacity to penetrate through the labyrinths of superficial fact into the resources of truth.

Such being the Jamesian concept of human refinement, James achieved nothing short of a radical reorientation of the fictional art as it freed itself from the impermanent, insignificant element of reality and attached itself to the permanent, and significant elements of truth. Although James had little active faith in the conventional creed of the church, his vision had in it the core of a non-conforming, indivi-

dualistic spirituality, His dedication to the art of fiction was in itself an intense personal religion, and he raised the house of fiction as a house of worship. He was a votary of refinement, and in the tales of Isabel Archer, Milly Theale, and Maggie Verver he dramatised religious experience outside of a creed but well within the redeeming possibilities of true religion. Henry James often spoke of the sense of the past, but history to him was not a mere chronicle of individual and collective contingencies of success and failure, aspiration and frustration; it was a kind of symbolic fulfilment of human culture, and a development of the human archetype from the ancestral Adam to the living man. The sense of the past was important not so much as a backdrop of human action, but as the basis for human participation and spiritual revitalization. James saw in Europe how he himself came at its end, whereas he saw in America how he came at its beginning, and this double perspective of cultural continuity and interaction was tbe generic content of the historical vision which entered into the archetypes of human refinement. Lambert Strether is the most striking example of the refined Western Man, who finally realises the significance of the present as a flash between two eternities. He achieves a sudden, unsuspected insight into life as the everlasting present, flowing into the textures of his consciousness and making him a master of the youthful present, bringing into the control of his own consciousness the memorable past and the descried future. Related to James's conception of religion aed history was the idea of an active consciousness enacting an independent life for itself in the resources of an autonomous will which has transcended morality beyond time and space. Lambert Strether, once again, is the perfect Jamesian illustration of this comprehensive individual growth achieved by total refinement; and his story, as it reveals itself, is a narrative simulacrum of the very processes of refinement, Henry James places, between Strether and his world, concentric circles of awareness; and by showing how the barriers are crossed by Strether's mind, he illustrates the dynamics of refinement. In his novels, Henry James adopts the technique of the story of the story leading the reader into the problem of the problem, and the passion of the passion, so that, in the final analysis, the reader aesthetically possesses the story, the problem and the passion, all with the steady discriminating energy of an active consciousness refined into the very truth of life. As a corollary to James's interest in the truth behind reality, his artistic expression follows not the links of narrative causation and the patterns of linguistic absolutism; but it enacts for itself an almost new language

in which the effort is to get behind the meaning of words, and then beyond them into the primal fountain-head of symbolism. Henry James does not present ideas as inert intellectual phenomena in a naturalistic sense, but as the dramatically maturing indices of human sensibility and human action and human awareness. The idea of refinement is developed through his works not as a conceptual idea merely, but rather as an operative inner dynamic revealing itself as a metaphor of human culture, or an image of the human spirit.

If Henry James's themes provide the outer measure of the drama of human refinement, his techniques provide its inner measure. Throughout his novels the narrative interest is centred not on human awareness, not on human behaviour but on human motivation. And this in itself constitutes in his work the artistic initial overture towards the climate and the style of refinement. James dramatises the fact and the possibility of refinement by offering the reader an insight into the structures of life as they activate the textures of human character and *vice versa*. The developing patterns of this response are crucially related to the nature and quality of human choice as it is brought to bear on the permanent paradoxes of life, such as freedom and necessity, good and evil, manners and morals, innocence and experience, illusion and reality, and knowledge and truth. Human choice is the determination of whatever range and scope of human individuality is permitted by the paradoxical nature of life. A choice made and valiantly upheld, inspite of its disagreeable consequences to one's self, becomes the most important estimation of the presence, or the lack, of refinement. The final gestures which the Jamesian protagonists make in a world, which is manipulated, provoked, transformed, or redeemed by their personal choices, are illustrations in case. Roderick Hudson is involved in a struggle out of which he finds no meaningful escape but self-destruction, for the other alternatives inevitably result in self-mutilation. He discovers that the latter either tend to place him under the power of others' will, or lure others into the orbit of his own, neither of which is a wholesome consummation, because the result would be endless human complicity and the loss of integral selfhood. His suicide is not a desperate artist's final fling at life, nor is it a cynical recoil against a loathed self-image. It is the courageous gesture of refinement pressed to its ultimate nerve of delicate perfection. Christopher Newman is similarly placed in an uneasy world of choice; and he too defies the promptings of a vindictive selfhood, and acknowledges the supremacy of self-abnegation. In his

willing suspension of his own human instinctive nature, he releases the better side of it into the open possibility of a life inspired and informed by higher values. Roderick Hudson and Christopher Newman have no buttressing supports for their American innocence which is exposed to the dangers of European experience. But both of them act naturally in terms of an American conscience purified by contact with evil outside themselves, and thereby become refined as individuals; and, having recovered their freedom of open, uninhibited action, they turn it in the direction of human solicitude. Their capacity for charity and forgiveness is a mark of their cultivated refinement. Isabel Archer in *The Portrait of a Lady* makes the wrong, instead of the right choice; and the knowledge of her husband's imperfection gives her the legitimate opportunity of undoing the personal harm resulted from her mistaken choice. But she takes full responsibility for the consequences of her choice, and even reinforces her ideal of the unretrenched life by integrating her shocks of suffering self-recognition into a full-blown consciousness of the mixed quality of life itself. Life deals with her harshly, no matter what the orginating causes of Isabel's humilitation; yet she refuses to deal harshly with life. She becomes an equal and a co-rival of nature in her capacity for a healing openness of possibility; and her refinement well becomes her title, "heiress of all ages". In Isabel's self-surrender lies the secret of human refinement, which in its turn redeems its pledges to her.

In the novels of the middle period, James explores the ambivalent nature of refinement, which, pre-empted of irreducible human integrity, becomes a force for evil. The characters in these novels are either unrefined, or are enemies of refinement, or are ineffectual agents of refinement. In the world of actual evil, without the possibilities of extended human awareness, refinement either defeats an inherent good, or converts it precipitously into its opposite. In a world of superficial good, on the other hand, refinement becomes a prey to over-reaching self-righteousness, and loses the name of refinement. Refinement as an ego-centric fact of culture can only walk on the crutches of a self-denominating illusion.

In the major novels, James moves into those areas of human experience and human consciousness, in which refinement has not only learnt to walk, but walk upright with graceful ease. Refinement can exist in a world albeit the evil which underlies life as a generic presence. It has the strength of its inner spiritual resources, and can

preserve itself. It can even go further and bring into its own fold the unrefined, and place them in the possibility of refinement. In the last novels, as Charlotte Stant says, "there are refinements". Lambert Strether is the unsuccessful ambassador who forgets his embassy; but he is, in the oblivious process, reawakened to himself, and his slumbering human individuality becomes resuscitated by the prospect of golden enlightenment. The failure of his mission becomes an interesting success in favour of self-integrity and cultural grace. His refinement is individual, and towards the end of the novel, although it has transcended its own academic mentors, it prefers to exist in its own being, pure, lonely, detached, and aloof.

In *The Wings of the Dove,* refinement is creative and spreads its aura of creativity to those who are effortlessly brought under its power. Milly Theale is an Isabel Archer who has come back, as it were, into the world, in which she has herself grown, in order to educate her masters in the school of refinement. Milly Theale has all the generic qualities of refinement, namely, sensitivity, responsiveness, understanding, compassion, and forgiveness; and she too, like Newman, desists from acts of furtive, or overt resentment. The world she lives in is already a great irrelevancy, in which she alone is the principle of order, because she alone is refined. When the Dove becomes pure wings, refinement acquires the influence of a will released from its disagreeable attributes of compulsive morality, and thus Milly, the dead woman, is able to convert and transform Merton Densher. Densher's final gesture of refusing to repudiate the memory of Milly and exploit her fortune is the fruit of achieved refinement. In *The Golden Bowl,* the drama of refinement is traced through its whole inevitable cycle of fulfilment, conversion, and renewal. Maggie Verver demonstates the ultimate virtue of refinement by daring its active possibilities in favour of a purposive and meaningful rehabilitation of the destinies of all concerned. Her moral resilience is not permitted to remain passively indulgent to human insufficiency. On the contrary, it presses itself forward and reaches out into the consciousness of others. As a consequence of her refinement coming out into the open field of human action, she prevents the collapse of cultural reality as symbolised in the institution of marriage. Refinement as it is developed in *The Golden Bowl,* not only reforms but also preserves, not only emancipates but also rehabilitates the sense of inter-relatedness between the individual and the community. The refinement, which has discovered its own nature by a necessary

detachment from the reality of the community, re-enters the context of reality in order to possess and master its ways and resources. Prince Amerigo is not only reawakened to his finer nature, but also his finer nature is given the redeeming choice of proving itself in a locus of reality, in which the supremacy of culture as against selfhood is illuminated. Refinement in *The Golden Bowl* assumes its total comprehensiveness, and even becomes transfigured into a symbolic equivalent of life in all its aspects, individual, cultural and aesthetic. When refinement achieves its rounded adequacy, and its plastic perfection, it is no longer a means to an end, for it has become an end in itself, and has no need for the surrogate mechanisms of life viewed in parts and segments. The "golden bowl" is cast away because it cannot, and should not outlive its symbolic usefulness. The wider truth of life must inevitably take the place of the limited attributes of truth. Thus, in *The Golden Bowl,* the Jamesian idea of refinement comes full circle.

In the novels of Henry James, the spiritualization of human action and the disembodiment of the human personality maximise the reality of the inner life and intensify the processes of the human consciousness. But, at the same time, the links in the chain of physical causation and psychological determination are not overlooked and the readers are continuously invited to comprehend the objective correlatives that concretize and synchronize the limits and horizons of man's life in this world. The Jamesian narrative method is not a mere perfunctory stylization of the content of experience, but it is more pointedly an instrument of artistic generosity which in the field of action is revealed as refinement. Although the raw energy and crude vitality of the physical world with its naturalistic imperatives are strained away in James's novels, there is yet revealed a genuine over-plus of felt life carved out of the unyielding and resisting resources of reality by means of a grasping imagination which has no parallel in American writing. The inner landscapes of the Jamesian world are inhabited by panoramic processions of types, analogues, and combinations of human experience. This densely citizened world arranges itself into its own demographic structures and movements, to which the idea of refinement provides the vital clue. James's societies, cultures, his heroes and heroines, his villains and vampires, his images of temporal and spatial differentiations, are all organized appositely in relation to the dramatic polarities of human refinement.

James's individual human beings are measured not by their given nature and characters, not by the elements of human finitude and ordered stability. On the contrary, they are exposed to the challenges and the opportunities that the world offers for refinement; and human inadequacy is portrayed essentially as the incapacity for growth and change, which the dynamic of refinement induces in the properly prepared modes of selfhood. The consummations of human individuality, on the other hand, are revealed in just those factors of human growth and change. In James's characterization of human types, one discovers ironic attentuations of human nature and there is throughout a sense of unforeseen drama in the manner in which character is transformed, and human destiny reversed. This bears a close relationship with subtle interchangeability of the given notions of value as the mechanisms of refinement begin to operate in individual and social groups. Christopher Newman, Isabel Archer, Lambert Strether, Milly Theale and Maggie Verver exemplify the positive ethos of refinement, but the major achievement of their refinement lies in its power to free the rigid posturings of being into the fluent processes of becoming. Through them, others, such as Densher and Amerigo, are set free to discover and fulfil the possibilities of their own refinement.

The villains and the vampires among James's characters are presented as being evil not in terms of their individual negative qualities, but in terms of the one overarching negation that comprehends all of them, the great negation in human character, as James understood it, the absence of refinement. Evil is evil, because it cannot change or grow, and its influence is entirely in the direction of arresting change and growth. Even apparent good is considered evil, because it is static, inert, and anti-evolutionary. Osmond, Madame Merle, Rose Armiger, the governess, Lord Mark, Kate Croy and Charlotte Stant are evil because they exploit those elements of order in human society which make for refinement, and because they pursue refinement as a Machiavellian means to their basic urges and appetencies. By and large, they intrude upon the processes of emerging selfhood in others. Art and purity which ought to be in reality the consummating factors of human refinement may themselves lead to spiritual confusion and moral delusion, as illustrated in *The Spoils of Poynton.* Idealism may also result in an ethical absolutism which destroys the finer fibres of human perfection, as is illustrated in spiritual sterility of the suffragette revolutionaries in *The Bostonians,*

Henry James's characterological types fall into sharply defined groups which do not lend themselves to the conventional classification of good and evil. They are more adequately understood in terms of the subtler contradistinctions in human nature as dramatised by the ideas of refinement. The refined are those who realise their own freedom within, and permit an analogous realisation in others. Good is essentially that which is open to the free flow of refinement, and evil is whatever frustrates this nimble plasticity of human possibility.

The conventional interpretation of James's novels as illustrating the dialectic of morals and manners acquires a fresh orientation when one applies the criterion of Jamesian refinement. Taking America as the basic metaphor of morals, and Europe as that of manners, James builds up an organic trans-Atlantic vision of human culture as a single manifestation of human truth. Lying on a European frontier of historical experience, America was forced upon its own independent resources. The product of the outstretched European conscience, America was called upon to redeem her isolative acculturation by the discovery of an autonomous culture of its own. The problem of America had been, from the beginning, to explore the cultural identity for herself in terms of a structure of reality, in which concrete historical universals were by definition, or by inhibition, excluded from its New World experience. An over-grown adult in conscience, America was yet a groping adolescent in cultural consciousness. To a Europe overburdened with the tyrannical minutae of aristocratic civility and feudal propriety American innocence was a desirable consummation. But to America, whose culture was in the nonage, innocence and its unshaped and uncrystallized self-images were of the utmost tragic consequence. American innocence could be fatally exposed like all "cloistered virtue" to the unexpected and unpredictable onslaughts of experience, against which an unformed character and an unevolved intellect may find it hard to sustain themselves. Henry James puts American innocence to the test of European experience, in which process the true and the false, the genuine and the spurious elements in American character may be properly sorted and dramatised in sharp contrast. The dramatic catalyst, which introduces the mechanisms of human variation and differentiation, is the idea of refinement. American conventional morality, its constant fear of undefined experience, its cultural infancy, its artistic impotency, and its democratic naivete are all in the way of salutary refinement, which stands as a force for a creative

self-identity. And hence it is that James's American philistines, puritans, and dilettantes are incapable of positive self-transformation. James's positive heroes and heroines, on the contrary, acquire the capacity for exercising their generic American traits of conscience by placing it in the extensive possibility of growth under European experience. Human integrity, self-sacrifice, resourceful openness of mind, heart and spirit, and cultural resiliance, are all brought out under the impact of their complex self-recognition.

European culture, on the contrary, is limited by its own virtues and by their antinomian possibilities. Tradition in Europe too had assumed a unilateral simplicity which was an obstacle to comprehensive human refinement. If America had come to view the vitalities of life as commodities of convenience, Europe had come to view them as no more than ritual embellishments of a life emptied of the quickening substance of moral conscience. If America enviously looked upon objects of art as hoardable possessions, Europe in its worst manifestations could regard them as inglorious fetishes of a devitalized antiquity. Sociel manners were missing in American society as unfortunately as Europe's other stock-piled emblems of high civilisation, such as aristocracy, manors, country houses, palaces, castles, and ivied ruins and wrecked gentlemen. European manners in isolation from the living reality of the historical present would simply render life inactive under encrusted veneer of cultural preciosity. The crying need of European society and European character was that it should re-establish its lost connections with reality by meeting American morals half way. The European suitors in the novels of Henry James reveal the strength and the weakness inherent in a culture of mere manners, when they seek to storm the gates of American innocence. Mere gallantry is a fretful misapplication of the ethos of the age of chivalry to a human condition that has historically matured into a different historical individuality. A European such as Prince Amerigo, on the contrary, responds eventually to the chances of total refinement and achieves a symbolic redemption of his culture by discovering the values of American morals. If Lambert Strether, the American, discovers Europe, Prince Amerigo discovers America, and the passage of Western culture into new truths and new experiences becomes symbolically completed. The cultural dialogue between the Oid and New Worlds is resolved by Henry James in his dramatic treatment of the attributes of refinement in a cross-cultural context.

As a passionate pilgrim in search of life, art, and culture, Henry James left his native America for Europe. His was but a lover's quarrel with America, and his sensibility and the entire direction of his creative energy were deeply rooted in the American imagination. It is not therefore surprising that one should discover in Henry James's fiction the same archetypal elements and patterns of the creative impulse as lie embedded in the works of the other classical American writers. The American writers before Henry James had all concerned themselves with the problem of human identity and were all united in the presentation of the drama of identity, as a quest for selfhood. Whitman and Melville were, before James, the major exponents of this concern, and each in an opposite fulfilment of the creative vision affirmed the characteristic quality of the American Matter. Walt Whitman, in his *Leaves of Grass*, continuously probed reality at the axes of the Self and the Cosmos, and articulated the double-genesis of the American selfhood. In *Song of Myself*, Whitman projected his own self identifying it with the democratic average of American humanity as the critical focus absorbing the in-rushing currents of the universe, and letting the whole of life order itself in the rich cumulative enjambments of its impressions of events, its images of experience, its symbols of signifinance, into the welcoming fertility of the subjective centre of poetic perception. As the ego-hero progresses in revitalizing his inner experience, he is lifted into a higher dimension of consciousness and, at this point of his spiritual take-off, the self is posited in the self-extending continuum of the cosmos. The centripetal force of the Poet's inclusive sensibility becomes transformed into a centrifugal force of a circumambient awareness. In its elegiac affirmations of the objective, impersonal transfiguration of human selfhood, the later work of Whitman, represented by *A Passage to India*. *When Lilacs last in the Dooryard Bloom'd*, and *The Prayer of Columbus*, brings the two arcs of human identity into a comprehensive vision of the unity of the self with the universe.

If Whitman as a Transcendentalist poet revealed the drama of the American self in rapture, in ecstasy, and in the joy of faith, Melville revealed it in its metaphysical paradoxes and ironic ambiguities. Melville's *Moby Dick* also deals with the problem of the American self, and also, like the *Leaves of Gress*, projects a dialectical design combining into a unified symbolic structure the centripetal and the centrifugal forces of selfhood. Captain Ahab is

symbolic of the introverted and aggressive fierceness of a human self seeking to devour all life. The White Whale is the externalization of the inner focus of presumptuous selfhood, into which Ahab seeks to force the cracking moulds of the universe. Ishmael, on the contrary, represents the forthgoing virtue of innocent American selfhood which is not destroyed, or subjugated by evil, but is rather educated and redeemed by it. Ishmael's self works in a direction opposite to Ahab's, and is capable of the necessary withdrawl from its own limited possibility, and can place itself in the wider identity of the universe. On the mystic crest of the White Whale, which is discovered on the equator, and in the mid-profundities of the Pacific Ocean, Ahab and Ishmael become integrated into a single experience of transcendental selfhood. The neo-Adamic reorientation of Ishmael's personality is the most significant fulfilment of the quest for selfhood in American literature.

Henry James too, unconsciously, merged his consciousness of human experience into the native discourse of American selfhood. A most obvious illustration of the analogous nature of Henry James's problem is to be found in the narrative of the education of Lambert Strether. Strether's original American self is so exclusively cultivated to a point of fineness that no fresh idea or experience was ever capable of invading it. But his introverted self, being nurtured in the American grain of conscience, is by definition capable of opening out into a world of untried potentialities. In Europe, his focus of vision is shifted from its narrow, subjective centrality to the extensive horizons of the objective outer world of impersonal freedom. Strether's refinement is dramatised at a point where this shift in selfhood occurs, and it is thematically reinforced by the contrastive transformation of himself and Chad Newsome in mutually opposite movements of time and space. The diagrammatic representation of the Strether-Chad relationship is profoundly reminiscent of the Ahab-Ishmael relationship, with the difference, that in Henry James's tale, there is the deepening irony of the reluctant adult growing young through wisdom, and the eager adolescent becoming old through experience. In fact, taken together as a single statement on the American self, Henry James's novels are unobtrusively identified with the classical American rather than the European tradition of literature. As Professor Spiller observes, "The back-trail of rejection had led into the heart of the American experience."[1]

The various stages in Henry James's artistic development can be fruitfully described as the phased progressions of his idea of refinement. The pattern that emerges is once again the American archetype of the self's symbolic journey towards fulfilment. If one approaches Henry James's total artistic output in terms of a notional fictional hero, one discovers in the progress of his complex fate the basic patterns of Jamesian refinement. The fictional hero first becomes unconsciously aware of the goal of refinement, and sets out consciously in quest of it. As he advances through the varying cycles of inner and outer reality, his resources of selfhood are placed under an ordeal of trying circumstances, precipitated by a division of loyalties. Coming out of the ordeal with the knowledge, but not yet a master of the ways of the world, he enters a stage of crisis in which the self is distorted either by under-estimation of facts, or by an over-estimation of values, and he is thereby plunged into the dark night of deprivation, and delusion of the self. After the tragic crisis, the forces of the self gather around a rallying point, and through an achieved conversion, a recovery of the self is rendered possible; and selfhood is then creatively enacted in the discovery of a transcendental element in experience, which heals the fractured human personality and rehabilitates it in the transfigured normalcies of life.

Within thi. four-fold formulation of progressive human refinement in relation to the qualitative modes of selfhood may be seen a minor pattern. In the first two stages of the hero's quest for refinement, the centripetal and the centrifugal forces of identity are exercised in the shifting frames of order and reality; while, in the next two movements, the pattern is repeated in a different dimension of the individual and social consciousness. Accordingly, the novels of the early period, *Roderick Hudson. The American. The Europeans, Confidence. and The Portait of a Lady*, dramatise the *gestalt* of human selfhood, in which the self seeks to achieve refinement by compelling the world to conform to its own individuality. The novels of the middle period, *The Bostonians, The Princess Casamassima*, and *The Tragic Muse*, reverse the pattern, and the human self is extroverted in terms of its commitment to a wider concern with the world. In the remaining novels of the middle period, the first pattern is repeated, but it undergoes an ironic inversion such that the self seeks to establish the world of evil in the focus of its own identity. *The Other House, The Spoils of Poynton, What Maisie Knew. The Awakward Age*, and *The Sacred Fount*, are all united in theme and in their implicit

criticism of life in projecting the destructive erosion of selfhood through an exaggerated exercise of presumptuous power over the possibilities of the world in perpetuating their modes of refinement. The novels of James's major phase, while reversing the above pattern, locate the human self in the world rather than the other way round, and they also retrace all the earlier phases in the growth of refined selfhood. *The Ambasaadors*, *The Wings of the Dove*, and *The Golden Bowl* liberate the creative potentialties of the self, and not only unite the self and the world in terms of achieved refinement, but also look further ahead towards the engagement of the refined self in an active human context, in which refinement, having become an end in itself, reveals its empirical efficiency in restoring the blocked-up channels of human communication.

The crucial presence, or absence, of refinement enacts the drama of human selfhood in James's protagonists, artists and private individuals and pilgrims in search of society. In his quest for artistic refinement Roderick Hudson tries to involve and implicate the universe in the drama of his own self, and in the process he realises the inadequacy of his ego-centric self and its consequent incapacity to draw in the world to its own centre of being. The introverted Hudson becomes the extroverted Nick in *The Tragic Muae*, and is called upon to face the ordeal of a choice between art and politics. Nick realises the inadequacy of a universe conceived as a single factor of reality for the artist, and the extrovert retraces his steps towards his original introverted self. In his enthusiasm that he had discovered the universe inadequate, the artist becomes presumptuously critical of it, and emerges as the narrator in *The Sacred Fount*, in whom there is a hardening of the heart, the spiritual fountain-head of all great art. Emerging out of this crisis engendered by a distortion of the self, Lambert Strether and Merton Densher, both journalists, acquire a correct knowledge of both the self and the universe. They make it clear that in refined art, as in refined life, the perfect circle of life's truth, which art endeavours to express, is drawn only when the arcs of the self and the universe come together in their inevitable fruitful complementariness. By withdrawing into his self, away from the universe, the artist withdraws away from a universe which provides him with the raw materials of his art. By withdrawing into the universe, away from his self, the artist withdraws from the very fountain-springs of his artistic creativity. Refinement lies in the artist being involved and uninvolved, in his being subjective and

objective, at one and the same time. The artist should be both himself and the universe in his art,

The private individual, too, is a pilgrim in search of the truth of his, or her selfhood. If refinement means an awareness of the self and of the universe, and of their limitations and possibilities, the private individual is as much interested in his, or her refinement as the 'artist'. In her quest for refinement, Isabel Archer endeavours to force the universe to conform to her self-determined system of values, and in the process is awakened to her own innocence and ignorance. Although she realises her mistake, she resolves to respect the choice she had made in response to her own nature. As Verena, in *The Bostonians,* Isabel is encouraged to posit her self in the universe, and is called upon to make a choice between marriage and feminist movement; and once again Isabel, as Verena, is true to herself, as she prefers marriage to the feminist movement, to which she has been made to commit herself much against her own nature. In *The Portrait of a Lady,* Isabel strains the universe into the framework of her selfhood to discover that the self is free enough to preserve its integrity, but cannot master the ways of a mysterious world without the resources of an enlightened selfhood. In *The Bostonians,* Isabel, as Verena, places the self in the universe with a view to comprehending its ways and means, and discovers the existence of ubiquitous evil in the universe. Self-integrity soon takes the form of self-superiority and presumptuous self-righteousness in Fleda Vetch, in *The Spoils of Poynton,* who suffers from a moral delusion resulting from the distortion of the self by an incomplete knowledge of the self and of the universe. The self which Isabel had discovered as virtuous is affirmed by Verena and this affirmation of the self, although not bad in itself, implies the absence of integrity outside the self, and thereby leads to self-distortion in Fleda Vetch. Milly Theale, in *The Wings of the Dove,* consummates Isabel's quest for illuminated selfhood by achieving an equal awareness of the integrity of the self and of the universe, and even goes further ahead to perpetuate the truth of selfhood through self-sacrifice and self-transcendence in favour of a universe replete with the possibilities of refinement. Her achieved refinement, which is the result of an illuminated selfhood, is instrumental in refining Merton Densher. In *The Golden Bowl,* Maggie Verver releases the immense potentialities of the self and the universe in terms of an achieved refinement. Harmony between the self and the universe is established when the creative and corrective

possibilities of both are merged in a redemptive consciousness of the "universal self".

In James, the women protagonists are not only the principals, but also the agents of refinement. They are always in advance of their male partners, and in their refinement active virtue is added on to spiritual prescience. Merton Densher and Prince Amerigo are reborn into redeemed adulthood, for their masculine energy is placed under the effective direction of women, who in being refined themselves, refine others. In the progress of man's selfhood from Eros to Agape, the still-refined Eve invokes the beneficient power of Grace in favour of Adam entering upon his own quest for refinement.

The questing Jamesian individual finally achieves a more mellow vision of himself in relation to others, and his selfhood reposes itself in a sphere of reality which is refined to a point of revelation and which places the human personality in the confidence of a love that lies deeper than the contortions of egoistic messianism and unenlightened guilt. The Jamesian protagonist through refinement discovers freedom as well as the resources of an untramelled self which must preserve, sanctify and enlarge the freedom. The freedom thus achieved is indistinguishable from the reality of truth; and where true refinement is, there reality is.

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4. *Roderick Hudson,* p. 45
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8. *Ibid.,* p. 198
9. *Ibid.,* p. 200
10. *Ibid.,* p. 325
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13. *Ibid.,* p. 64
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23. *Ibid.,* p. 43
24. *The American,* p. 34
25. *Ibid.,* p. 37
26. *Ibid.,* p. 48
27. *Ibid.,* p. 48
28. *Ibid.,* p. 86
29. *Ibid.,* p. 182
30. *Ibid.,* p. 201
31. CF., Christof Wegelin, *The Image of Europe in Henry James.*
32. *The American.* p. 168
33. *Ibid.,* p. 224
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36. *Confidence*, p. 253
37. *The Portrait of a Lady*, p. 68
38. *Ibid.*, p. 72
39. *Ibid.*, p. 42
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41. *Ibid.*, p. 165
42. *Ibid.*, p. 156
43. *Ibid.*, p. 154
44. *Ibid.*, p. 187
45. *Ibid.*, p. 599
46. *Ibid.*, p. 399
47. *Ibid.*, Vol. II., p. 16
48. *Ibid.*, p. 71
49. *Ibid.*, p. 73
50. *Ibid.*, p. 73
51. *Ibid.*, p. 81
52. *Ibid.*, p. 196
53. J. W. Ward, *The Imagination of Disaster*, p. 47
54. David Daiches, "Sensibility and Technique," *Kenyon Review*, (Autumn 1943 pp. 573-574) " Isabel Archer, having made the initial - though cumulative - moral error, which results in her unhappy marriage, justifies and redeems herself (though not physically) by her decision to return to her husband and abide by her earlier ideal of marriage inspite of the fact tnat her husband for his part does not represent the ideal".

CHAPTER : III

1. *The Bostonians*, p. 112
2. *Ibid.*, p. 18
3. *Ibid.*, p. 36
4. *Ibid.*, p. 170
5. *Ibid.*, p. 316
9. *Ibid.*, p. 398
7. *Ibid.*, p. 31
8. *Ibid.*, p. 66
9. *Ibid.*, Introduction to *The Bostonians*, London, 1952, pp. 11-12 (Irving Howe)
10. *Ibid.*, p. 345
11. *The Reverberator*, p. 195

12. *Ibid.*, p. 196
13. *Ibid.*, p. 101
14. *Tha Tragic Muse*, p. 15
15. *Ibid.*, p. 192
16. "We must recognize our particular form, the instrument that each of us - each of us who carries anything - carries in his being. Mastering this instrument, learning to play it in perfection - that's what I call duty, what I call conduct, what I call success".
    The Tragic Muse, p. 309
17. *Ibid.*, p. 311
18. *Ibid.*, p. 551
19. *Ibid.*, p. 187, "He disliked besmoked drawing rooms and irregular meals and untidy arrangements... the importunate photographs which gave on his nerves... tumbled about with cups and under smeary glasses."

CHAPTER : IV

1. It is heartening to note that Lyall H. Powers agrees with my interpretation of the character of Fleda Vetch in his recently published book. He observes :

   This brilliant novella is concerned with poor Feda Vetch's unhappy love affair with Owen Gereth - the unhappy outcome being largely the result of Feeda's hyperscrupulosity, a kind of elephantiasis of the moral sense. It offers another example of the evil effects of an excess of Virtue.

   Henry James : An Introduction and interpretation: p. 123

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2. J. A. Ward, *The Imagination of Disaster*, p. 90
3. *What Maisie Knew*, p. 148
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10. *The Sacred Fount*, pp. 168-169

11. *Ibid.*, p. 168
12. *Ibid.*, p. 230
13. *Ibid.*, p. 213
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15. *Ibid.*, p. 18
16. *Ibid.*, p. 224
17. *Ibid.*, p. 166
18. *Ibid.*, p. 173
19. *Ibid.*, pp. 60-61
20. For this interpretation, I must acknowledge my indebtedness to Jean Frantz Blackall's article. 'The Sacred Fount as a Comedy of the limited observer'., PMLA, Sept. 1963, Vol. LXXVIII, No. 4 Part 1, pp. 384-393

CHAPTER : V

1. *The Ambassadors*, p. 6
2. *Ibid.*, p. 9
3. *Ibid.*, p. 16
4. CF., R. W. Stallman, Afterword to the Signet Edition of *The Ambassadors*, p. 380
5. *The Ambassadors*, p. 13
6. *Ibid.*, p. 15
7. *Ibid.*, p. 14
8. *Ibid.*, p. 360
9. *Ibid.*, p. 374
10. *Ibid.*, p. 53
11. *The Wings of the Dove*, p. 249
12. *Ibid.*, p. 251
13. *Ibid.*, p. 122
14. *Ibid.*, p. 107
15. *The Wings of the Dove*, p. 187
16. *Ibid.*, p. 187
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19. *Ibid.*, p. 75
20. *Ibid.*, p. 282
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28. *Ibid.*, p. 246
29. *Ibid.*, p. 246
30. *Ibid.*, p. 304
31. *Ibid.*, p. 456
32. *Ibid.*, p. 512
33. *Ibid.*, p. 89
34. *The Golden Bowl*, p. 237
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37. *Ibid.*, p. 18
38. *Ibid.*, p. 18
39. *Ibid.*, p. 21
40. *Ibid.*, p. 35
41. *Ibid.*, p. 35
42. *Ibid.*, p. 27
43. *Ibid.*, p. 172
44. *Ibid.*, p. 172
45. *Ibid.*, p. 178
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49. *Ibid.*, p. 227
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53. *Ibid.*, p. 511

CHAPTER : VI

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